

NEWS

United States Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney, District of New Jersey
970 Broad Street, Seventh Floor
Newark, New Jersey 07102



Paul J. Fishman, United States Attorney

More Information? Call the Assistant U.S. Attorney or other contact listed below to see if more information is available.

News on the Internet. News Releases and related documents are posted at our website.
Go to: <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/nj/press/index.html>

Contact:

Michael Drewniak, Public Affairs Officer
973-645-2888

vanp1210.rel
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Dec. 10, 2009

Former New Jersey Assemblyman Indicted for
Allegedly Accepting \$10,000 Cash Bribe

(More)

Public Affairs Office
Michael Drewniak, PAO

973-645-2888

<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/nj/press/index.html>

TRENTON – Former New Jersey Assemblyman Daniel M. Van Pelt was indicted today in connection with Van Pelt’s acceptance of a corrupt \$10,000 cash payment made in exchange for Van Pelt’s official assistance on real estate development matters before the State of New Jersey and Ocean Township, U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

The Indictment charges that Van Pelt, while a member of the New Jersey General Assembly and its Committee on the Environment and Solid Waste, accepted \$10,000 in cash from a government cooperating witness (CW), in exchange for the promise of helping the CW obtain development approvals from New Jersey’s Department of Environmental Protection, among other things.

The Indictment stems from an undercover FBI political corruption and international money laundering investigation that became public on July 23. Van Pelt was charged in a criminal complaint on that day.

Fishman said the corruption and money laundering investigations are continuing.

Van Pelt will have to appear for arraignment on the Indictment on a date to be determined.

According to the Indictment, Van Pelt met with the CW at a restaurant in Waretown on Feb. 11, 2009, and suggested to the CW, “you should hire me as a consultant.” On Feb. 21, 2009, according to the Indictment, Van Pelt and the CW met at a restaurant in Atlantic City. During the meeting, Van Pelt asked the CW, “what do you want me to do for you?” When the CW responded that he was concerned about his ability to obtain Coastal Area Facilities Act (CAFRA) permits from the State of New Jersey, Van Pelt stated that he had “a pretty good relationship with the State . . . long before [he] became an Assemblyman.” Later during this meeting, Van Pelt accepted \$10,000 in cash from the CW. When the CW reiterated that he needed assistance with the DEP and CAFRA, Van Pelt replied, “Alright. Well you call me anytime.”

The Indictment further alleges that Van Pelt deposited the \$10,000 in cash into his personal bank account shortly after receiving the money from the CW, utilizing separate deposits of \$5,500 and \$4,400. The Indictment alleges that in a subsequent meeting on May 15, 2009, the CW queried Van Pelt as to what Van Pelt would do if the CW’s permit applications were among many other such applications. Van Pelt responded to the CW that he would ask that the applications be moved “to the top of the pile” and further that Van Pelt would “sit down and physically meet” with the DEP.

The Indictment charges Van Pelt with one count of attempted extortion under color of official right, which carries a maximum statutory penalty of 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine; and one count of accepting corrupt payments in connection with a business or transaction or series of transactions with the State of New Jersey, an entity receiving more than \$10,000 in federal funds during a specified one-year period, which carries a maximum statutory penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

All defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

Fishman credited Special Agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun, and the IRS Criminal Investigation Division, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge William P. Offord, for the investigation of Van Pelt and the other defendants. Fishman also thanked the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of Prosecutor Luis A. Valentin, for their assistance in the investigation.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney David Bocian of the Special Prosecutions Division.

-end-

Defense counsel: Michael V. Gilberti, Esq., Red Bank