

For Immediate Release
April 11, 2011

**ALBUQUERQUE MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO
MANIPULATING URINE TEST FOR CRIMINAL DEFENDANT**

ALBUQUERQUE – United States Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales announced that, this morning, Albuquerque resident **Ronald Lopez**, 45, pled guilty to tampering with a witness by misleading conduct under a plea agreement with the United States Attorney's Office. Lopez entered a guilty plea to count 1 of a two-count indictment charging him with violating federal law that prohibits obstructive conduct intended unlawfully to affect the presentation of evidence in federal proceedings. Specifically, Lopez admitted helping a criminal defendant cheat on a urinalysis test and thus preventing the U.S. Probation Department from reporting a possible violation of supervision to the federal court. At sentencing, which has yet to be scheduled, Lopez faces up to twenty years imprisonment, three years of supervised release and a \$250,000 fine.

Lopez, a former employee of Relevancy, Inc. (Relevancy), a company that assists U.S. Probation with drug testing of criminal defendants, was arrested on July 19, 2010. According to the indictment, Relevancy collected urine samples for drug testing from criminal defendants who were supervised by U.S. Probation and were required by court order to undergo drug testing as a condition of their supervision. Under its contract with U.S. Probation, Relevancy was required accurately and honestly to label the urine samples with the names of criminal defendants providing the samples and then to transfer the properly labeled samples to the U.S. Probation laboratory where the samples were analyzed. With the expectation that urine samples were properly labeled, U.S. Probation routinely relied on the results of drug testing on the urine samples it received from Relevancy to prepare reports on criminal defendants that it submitted to

federal judges, and the federal judges relied on the reports to determine whether criminal defendants had violated the conditions of their supervision.

The indictment charged Lopez with two counts of permitting criminal defendants to bring in substitute samples instead of providing their own urine samples for the drug tests. In his plea agreement, Lopez made the following admissions to support his guilty plea to count 1 of the indictment:

From approximately October 2008 through March 2009, I was employed as a urinalysis technician for Relevancy Inc. ("Relevancy") in Albuquerque, NM. In that capacity I was responsible for conducting urinalysis tests on, inter alia, federal probationers to assist in determining whether they were compliant with the terms of their court-ordered supervision. In October of 2008, I was trained by a United States Probation Officer in the proper procedures for chain-of-custody, observation and collection of urine specimens submitted for drug testing in the federal District of New Mexico. During my employment with Relevancy, I allowed a probationer to substitute a clean urine sample for their urine during a urinalysis test. I observed the probationer produce a vial of urine from the probationer's pocket and pour the urine into the urinalysis container. I knew that the urine sample provided by the probationer was not a legitimate urine sample of that probationer. Furthermore, I knew that the result of allowing the substituted urine sample would be that Relevancy would be unable to provide an accurate urine specimen to the United States Department of Probation which would, in turn, prevent accurate information concerning a possible violation of supervised release from being communicated to a United States District Judge.

Under the terms of the plea agreement, count 2 of the indictment will be dismissed when Lopez is sentenced. Lopez is released under the supervision of U.S. Probation pending his sentencing hearing.

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Joel R. Meyers.

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