

Department of Justice

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**FORMER JUDGE SENTENCED TO 18 MONTHS FOR
TRANSPORTING AN INDIVIDUAL IN INTERSTATE COMMERCE
WITH THE INTENT THAT THE INDIVIDUAL ENGAGE IN
PROSTITUTION**

BUFFALO, N.Y.-- RONALD TILLS, 74, of West Falls, New York, who was convicted of transporting an individual in interstate commerce with the intent that the individual engage in prostitution on September 4, 2008, was sentenced to 18 months incarceration and a \$25,000 fine by U.S. District Judge William M. Skretny, Acting U.S. Attorney Kathleen M. Mehlretter of the Western District of New York announced today.

Assistant U.S. Attorney John E. Rogowski, who handled the sentencing phase of the case, stated that the defendant, a former state legislator, a former New York Court of Claims Judge and Acting Supreme Court Judge, and a former Judicial Hearing Officer, had been convicted of transporting an individual in interstate commerce with the intent that the individual engage in prostitution when he, and other members of the Buffalo Chapter of the Loyal Order of Jesters, including retired Lockport Police Captain John Trowbridge and Michael Stebick, Till's former law clerk, both of whom previously pled guilty and have been sentenced in the case, transported women to Jester events where the women engaged in sex acts for money with members of the Jesters. Tills recruited women to engage in prostitution at Jester events in locales including Western New York, Pennsylvania, Kentucky and Ontario, Canada. One of the women transported by Tills was an undocumented alien who was engaging in prostitution at a Western New York massage parlor frequented by Tills. The undocumented woman was required to engage in prostitution by the owner of the massage in order to pay off the debt incurred by the undocumented alien in being smuggled into the United States. The owner of the massage parlor, Lisa Chong, previously pled guilty to sex trafficking by force, fraud and coercion and was sentenced to 72 months incarceration. At sentencing, the government noted that the undocumented woman, who was transported to a Jesters' event in Kentucky, spoke

only limited English and, thus, was essentially incapable of declining a Jester's request for a sexual act. Another woman recruited by Tills was a woman who had previously appeared before him as a defendant in a criminal case and who had been sentenced by Tills. In imposing sentence, Judge Skretny noted that Tills engaged in the criminal activity repeatedly, over several years, and while Tills was a judge.

The conviction was the culmination of an investigation on the part of District's Human Trafficking Task Force and Alliance (WDNY HTTFA), which included the Federal Bureau of Investigation, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Larry R. Willis; the United States Border Patrol, under the direction of Acting Chief Patrol Agent Kevin Oaks; Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Lev J. Kubiak; and the Erie County Sheriff's Office, under the direction of Sheriff Timothy Howard.