



U.S. Department of Justice

***United States Attorney
Eastern District of Arkansas***

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 10, 2005**

**CONTACT: Bud Cummins
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PINE BLUFF COUNCILMAN SENTENCED

Little Rock, AR -- Bud Cummins, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Arkansas, announced today the Sentencing of Jack Foster, a member of the Pine Bluff City Council. U.S. District Judge James M. Moody sentenced Foster to 36 months imprisonment, plus three years of supervised release and a \$100 special assessment..

On September 24, 2004, a jury convicted Foster of one count of aiding and abetting an attempt to affect interstate commerce by extortion under color of official right in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1951 and 2. At the time of the conviction, the jury found that the offense involved a payment for the purpose of influencing an elected official and that Foster was a leader and organizer in the offense.

The Indictment alleged that Foster and Billy Freeman, another member of the Pine Bluff City Council, agreed to vote in favor of a proposal that would be presented to the Pine Bluff City Council and to obtain the additional votes necessary for the proposal to pass in exchange for payment. Billy Freeman requested payment in the amount of \$71,000 - \$72,000 be made to him.

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According to the indictment, Freeman needed the money in order to reimburse the City of Pine Bluff \$71,648 in funds the City had previously advanced to his company, Southeast Arkansas Community Development Corporation. In addition to the money to be paid to Freeman, Jack Foster also required payment for his vote and for his efforts in securing the additional votes needed for the measure to pass. Law enforcement was notified of the extortion and began an investigation into the allegations. As a result of the extortion, Foster and Freeman received a total of \$32,500.

Billy Freeman pled guilty to the offense on April 30, 2004. Sentencing for Freeman is scheduled for March 16, 2005 at 1:15 before Judge Moody.

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Arkansas State Police. Assistant United States Attorneys Karen Coleman and Edward O. Walker tried the case.

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