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PRESS RELEASE

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FORMER ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT TO U.S. SENATOR CHARGED WITH MAKING PROHIBITED COMMUNICATIONS TO SENATE OFFICE

WASHINGTON – The former administrative assistant to a U.S. senator was charged today by a federal grand jury in the District of Columbia with violating criminal conflict of interest laws, announced Assistant Attorney General Lanny A. Breuer of the Criminal Division; U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. of the District of Columbia; and James W. McJunkin, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI's Washington Field Office.

The indictment charges Douglas Hampton, 48, formerly of Las Vegas, with seven counts of violating the criminal conflict of interest laws. Hampton will be arraigned on March 31, 2011, in U.S. District Court in the District of Columbia.

According to the indictment, from January 2007 to April 30, 2008, Hampton was employed as the administrative assistant to a U.S. senator. The administrative assistant and chief of staff positions were the most senior positions in the senator's office. While he was serving as administrative assistant, Hampton allegedly signed a form certifying that he had completed training required by the Senate Select Committee on Ethics that included training on the one-year post-employment lobbying restrictions mandated by The Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007.

According to the indictment, that legislation was enacted by Congress for the purpose of providing greater transparency and accountability in both Houses by, among other things, slowing down the "revolving door" between congressional employment and post-employment lobbying activities. The legislation prohibits a senior Senate staffer, for a period of one year after termination of employment with the Senate, from knowingly making any communication to a Senate office with the intent to influence official actions on behalf of another person.

The indictment alleges that on May 1, 2008, Hampton left his employment with the U.S. senator and obtained employment as a government affairs consultant with an airline company and an energy company, both headquartered in Las Vegas.

According to the indictment, between May 1, 2008, and May 1, 2009, while he was subject to The Honest Leadership and Open Government Act's one-year restriction, Hampton knowingly and willfully made, with the intent to influence, communications to staff members of the U.S. senator on behalf of the Las Vegas airline company and energy company, seeking action by the senator and the staff members in their official capacities.

The indictment alleges that Hampton, on behalf of the airline company, sought the assistance of the senator and the staff members in convincing the Department of Transportation to reconsider its position on a fuel surcharge pricing issue and to delay or withdraw an enforcement action regarding fees charged on the company's website, as well as to help schedule a meeting in March 2009 involving the secretary of transportation and executives from the airline company.

The indictment also alleges that Hampton, on behalf of the energy company, sought the assistance of the senator and the staff members to convince the Department of Interior to expedite release of an environmental impact statement that would allow the energy company to move forward on its delayed proposal to build a coal-fired power plant in eastern Nevada.

The maximum penalty for each of the seven counts alleged in the indictment is five years in prison. Hampton also faces a maximum fine of \$250,000 per count.

An indictment is merely an accusation, and a defendant is presumed innocent unless proven guilty in a court of law.

This case is being prosecuted by Trial Attorneys Deborah Sue Mayer and Edward T. Kang of the Criminal Division's Public Integrity Section, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Bryan Seeley for the U.S. Attorney's Office in the District of Columbia. The case was investigated by the FBI's Washington Field Office.

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