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Local Businesswoman Sentenced for Defrauding the Federal E-Rate Program and for Theft of Public Funds

Hammond, Indiana—Donna P. English, d/b/a/ Project Managers, Inc. (PMI), was sentenced today for defrauding the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) E-Rate Program and the River Forest Community School District (RFCSC), located in Hobart, Indiana. English was also sentenced for the theft of public money from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that she received as a result of her employment as a technology consultant for the Michigan City Housing Authority, located in Michigan City, Indiana. Senior District Court Judge James T. Moody sentenced English to 27 months imprisonment and 3 years supervised release. The Court also ordered English to pay \$213,063.73 in restitution to the victims.

On December 6, 2010, Donna P. English, 53, of Michigan City, Indiana, pled guilty to two (2) counts of wire fraud, one (1) count of mail fraud, and one (1) count of theft of public funds. English admitted to defrauding the E-Rate Program and RFCSC by submitting false invoices and information to the E-Rate Program, causing RFCSC to submit false information to the E-Rate Program, and accepting payments for products and services not provided. She also accepted "cash advances" from RFCSC for her purported E-Rate services and did not return the cash advances once she received payment from the E-Rate Program. English also pled guilty to theft of public funds which were paid to her for technology products and services that she failed to provide to the Michigan City Housing Authority.

The E-Rate Program, created by Congress in the Telecommunications Act of 1996, provides funds to schools, school districts, and libraries to assist them in connecting to and utilizing the Internet and telephone services. The E-Rate Program is funded by money collected from telecommunications carriers and telephone users, and is administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC), a not-for-profit corporation acting under the oversight of the FCC. Depending on the financial condition of the applicant, the E-Rate Program can pay up to 90 percent of an applicant's eligible service costs.

Michigan City Housing Authority provides housing assistance to eligible low-income, senior, and/or disabled individuals and is funded by HUD.

This case was investigated by the Antitrust Division of the United States Department of Justice, the United States Department of Education Office of Inspector General, the United States Postal Inspection Service, the Indiana State Police, the Federal Communications Commission Office of Inspector General, and the Housing and Urban Development Office of Inspector General. This case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Toi Houston, and Jennifer Dixon, Trial Attorney, Anti-Trust Division.