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FORMER LAKE COUNTY CLERK CHARGED IN PUBLIC CORRUPTION INDICTMENT

Hammond, Indiana- A federal grand jury returned a five count indictment against former Lake County Clerk Thomas Philpot alleging mail fraud and theft from a federally funded program while serving as an elected official, announced David Capp, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Indiana.

Philpot, 54, of Highland, Indiana, who is currently serving as the Lake County Coroner, is accused of devising a scheme to defraud Lake County, Indiana, the State of Indiana operating through its Department of Child Services, and the United States of America operating through its Office of Child Support Enforcement, of funds in the form of incentive payments to himself to which he was not legally entitled.

As part of the duties of the Clerk's office, Philpot was required to collect money under the State of Indiana Title IV-D Child Support program. One component of this program allowed for the payment of incentives to Clerk's office employees if certain goals were met in the collection of child support payments.

An elected official, however, could not take any incentive payment unless it was authorized by the county fiscal body, the Lake County Council. The Lake County Council never authorized Philpot to take incentive payments himself.

From on or about December of 2004, and continuing through October of 2009, Philpot obtained Title IV-D incentive payments for himself of approximately \$24,700. Counts one through three of the Indictment allege mail fraud for causing reimbursement claim forms for Title IV-D expenditures to be placed the United States mail in January 2007, April 2009, and November 2009. Counts four and five of the Indictment allege that Philpot did intentionally steal, obtain by fraud, and otherwise without authority convert to his own use, property worth at least \$5,000 owned by, and under the care, custody, and control of Lake County, Indiana.

Acting FBI Special Agent in Charge Danny L. Barkley stated: “The FBI will continue to dedicate the necessary resources to relentlessly pursue and bring to justice those public officials who betray the trust and confidence of the American people by exploiting their official position for personal gain by engaging in fraud. The American people continue to be outraged by public officials enriching themselves at public expense. Corrupt public officials should know that the FBI and its partner agencies will continue to pursue them.”

These charges were filed as the result of an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. This case has been assigned to and will be prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Philip Benson.

The United States Attorney's Office emphasized that an Indictment is merely an allegation and that all persons charged are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty in court.

The specific sentence in each case to be imposed upon conviction will be determined by the judge after a consideration of federal sentencing statutes and the Federal Sentencing Guidelines.