



*United States Attorney  
Southern District of New York*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**FORMER NYC DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION BUS INSPECTOR  
SENTENCED TO 30 MONTHS IN PRISON  
FOR EXTORTION AND BRIBERY**

LEV L. DASSIN, the Acting United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that GEORGE ORTIZ, a former employee of the New York City Department of Education ("DOE"), was sentenced today by United States District Judge BARBARA S. JONES in Manhattan federal court to 30 months in prison. ORTIZ pleaded guilty on February 6, 2009, to extortion; extortion conspiracy; soliciting, receiving and accepting bribes; and conspiracy to solicit, receive, and accept bribes.

According to the Indictment, statements made at the guilty plea and sentencing proceeding, and other documents filed in the case:

ORTIZ worked as a supervisory inspector in the DOE Office of Pupil Transportation ("OPT"). OPT sets the specifications for bus routes; oversees the process by which private bus companies bid for and obtain certain bus routes; processes requests from bus companies to have certain routes classified as "extended" (and hence more costly) because they begin earlier or run later than standard DOE bus times; and conducts safety and mechanical inspections of school buses. ORTIZ was specifically assigned to the OPT division responsible for providing bus and other transportation services to special education students.

From at least the mid-1990s until 2007, ORTIZ solicited and accepted cash payments from various private bus company owners who held transportation contracts with DOE. ORTIZ used his official position within DOE to collect payments from bus company owners in exchange for various benefits relating to OPT business. For example, ORTIZ took cash payments from bus company owners to falsely classify certain bus routes as "extended" routes, and in connection with the allocation of certain DOE bus routes to those companies. ORTIZ also collected payments in

exchange for favorable treatment relating to school bus safety violations uncovered during inspections, and providing advance notice of safety inspections that were supposed to be unannounced. ORTIZ received a total of at least \$200,000 in cash bribes, from several bus company owners.

In addition to the 30-month prison term, ORTIZ was sentenced to three years' supervised release and ordered to pay \$5,000 in restitution.

ORTIZ, 63, of the Bronx, New York, is one of four former DOE supervisors and inspectors to be found guilty in this case. NEIL CREMIN, 61, of Queens, New York, pleaded guilty on February 6, 2009 to a bribery conspiracy charge, and was sentenced on June 5, 2009 to 8 months in prison. IRA SOKOL, 70, of Brooklyn, New York, pleaded guilty on February 6, 2009, to a bribery conspiracy charge, and is scheduled to be sentenced on July 29, 2009. MILTON SMITH, 55, of Tobyhanna, Pennsylvania, was found guilty by a jury on February 27, 2009 of extortion and bribery charges, and is scheduled to be sentenced on June 29, 2009.

Mr. DASSIN praised the work of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Inspector General and Office of Labor-Management Standards, and the New York Police Department, as well as the Special Commissioner of Investigation for the New York City School District.

Assistant United States Attorneys ELIE HONIG and KENNETH POLITE are in charge of the prosecution.

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