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**FORMER LIQUOR ENFORCEMENT OFFICER SENTENCED TO
36 MONTHS IN PRISON FOR EXTORTION**

PHILADELPHIA - Gina Marie Kepler, 36, of Warrington, PA, was sentenced today to three years in prison for Hobbs Act Extortion, announced United States Attorney Zane David Memeger. Kepler was a former State Police Liquor Enforcement Officer (“LEO”) when, between October 2006 and October 2008, she used the power of her official position to obtain money from the owners of establishments that serve alcoholic beverages to patrons. She was charged with nine counts of Hobbs Act extortion and pleaded guilty June 3, 2010, in the middle of her trial.

In her capacity as an LEO, Kepler had the authority to inspect businesses serving alcohol, to conduct investigations regarding the illegal sale of alcohol, to issue citations, and to order establishments to close if found in violation of Pennsylvania’s liquor laws. She was charged with taking money or property from nine bars or restaurants using the power of her position to force those owners to give her property or money. Kepler promised business owners that in exchange for money she would give them “scanners” to use in checking the identification of their patrons. But Kepler never delivered the scanners, or delivered them only to collect them later. Kepler also received money from two bar/restaurant owners in exchange for the promise to resolve a regulatory or legal violation. Finally, Kepler allegedly borrowed money from one owner and never repaid it. The establishments involved include: The Chill Bar in Holland, Bucks County; Kenny’s Spirited Eatery in Southampton, Bucks County; Johnny Apples Restaurant in Holland, Bucks County; Maggio’s in Southampton, Bucks County; the Langhorne Hotel in Langhorne, Bucks County; Jerzee’s Sports Bar in Glenside, Montgomery County; Bobby Burgers Tavern in Conshohocken, Montgomery County; Creek Side Inn in Chalfont, Bucks County; and, the former Finn McCools in Warrington, Bucks County.

In addition to the prison term, U.S. District Court Judge Stewart Dalzell ordered Kepler to pay restitution in the amount of \$9,965, serve three years of supervised release and pay a \$900 special assessment.

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Pennsylvania State Police. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Arlene D. Fisk.

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