

# Department of Justice

United States Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr.  
Western District of New York

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## MAN SENTENCED FOR BRIBING A PUBLIC OFFICIAL

BUFFALO, N.Y. - U.S. Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr. announced today that Joe Phouthavongsa, 49, of Rochester, NY, who pleaded guilty to bribing a public official, was sentenced to five months in prison, five months home confinement and one year supervised release by U.S. District Court Judge Richard J. Arcara.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Russell T. Ippolito, Jr., who handled the case, stated that Phouthavongsa gave an immigration official \$5,000 in cash to pass two other unnamed individuals on an English language proficiency examination used in the naturalization process to obtain United States citizenship. Under-cover law enforcement officers acted as immigration officials who were willing to accept a cash bribe in return for facilitating the naturalization of the associates of the two men. Phouthavongsa was arrested outside the U.S. Courthouse, along with co-defendant Sengchanh Sengsavath, after being told to appear there for a feigned naturalization ceremony for their associates. Phouthavongsa is a United States citizen who was originally born in the country of Laos.

Sengchanh Sengsavath, 48, of Rochester, also pleaded guilty to bribing a public official and will be sentenced on February 3, 2012 by Judge Arcara.

The sentencing is the culmination of an investigation by Special Agents of the Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, under the direction of Gregory K. Null and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Christopher M. Piehota.