

# Department of Justice

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

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## ROCHESTER MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO BRIBING A PUBLIC OFFICIAL

BUFFALO, N.Y. - U.S. Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr. announced today that Sengchanh Sengsavath, 48, of Rochester, N.Y., pleaded guilty to bribing a public official before U.S. District Court Judge Richard J. Arcara. The charge carries a maximum penalty of 15 years in prison, a fine of \$250,000 or both.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Russell T. Ippolito, Jr., who is handling the case, stated that Sengsavath gave an immigration official \$5,000 in cash to pass two other unnamed individuals on an English language proficiency examination which is part of the naturalization process to obtain United States Citizenship. Undercover 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. The defendant was arrested outside the U.S. Courthouse, along with co-defendant Joe Phouthavongsa, after being told to appear there for a feigned naturalization ceremony for their associates. Sengsavath is a United States citizen who was born in the country of Laos.

Joe Phouthavongsa was convicted of bribing a public official on September 20, 2011.

The plea is the result 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.

Sentencing is scheduled for February 3, 2012 at 1:00 p.m. before Judge Arcara.