

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS
EASTERN DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)	No.
)	
v.)	Violations: Title 18, United States
)	Code, Sections 666, 1343, and 1951
WILLIE B. COCHRAN)	

COUNT ONE

The SPECIAL JUNE 2015 GRAND JURY charges:

1. At times material to this Indictment:
 - a. The City of Chicago was a unit of local government known as a municipal corporation, and a political subdivision of the State of Illinois.
 - b. The City of Chicago’s legislative branch of government was the Chicago City Council, which was comprised of fifty City Council members, each of whom represented one of Chicago’s fifty wards, and who were also known as Aldermen. The Aldermen were compensated and publicly elected.
 - c. Defendant WILLIE B. COCHRAN was Alderman of the 20th Ward in Chicago.
 - d. It was one of the functions of Aldermen to issue letters that communicated aldermanic support or non-support for real estate development projects proposed for land located in their respective wards, which letters were instrumental in securing governmental action or inaction relating to the proposed projects.
 - e. The federal government created the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (“NSP”) to assist communities affected by foreclosure. The City of Chicago

was awarded over \$150 million in NSP Funds to assist communities, including those in the 20th Ward, in stabilizing neighborhoods by getting vacant foreclosed homes up-to-code and occupied as quickly as possible.

f. The City of Chicago utilized Organization A to administer its NSP program. Once developers obtained approval from Organization A, they could bid on NSP properties to redevelop. Once the bidding period closed for a particular NSP property, Organization A, in consultation with the City of Chicago's Department of Planning and Development, presented a list of the final bids to the alderman of the ward in which the NSP property was located. Aldermanic support was required to win a bid, which could be conveyed by a letter of support from the alderman. Upon awarding a project to a developer, Organization A authorized periodic disbursements of NSP funds to the developer during the course of the redevelopment to cover expenses, which could include legal fees.

g. Individual A was a licensed attorney in Illinois who, among other things, represented real estate developers and real estate development projects.

h. In 2010 and 2011, defendant WILLIE B. COCHRAN provided letters of support to Individual A for real estate development projects in the 20th Ward, including letters dated July 18, 2011 and December 12, 2011, relating to an NSP property, Project A, for which Individual A's firm received legal fees in August 2012 and which was completed in approximately 2014.

2. Beginning in or around December 2011, and continuing to in or around January 2012, at Chicago, in the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, and elsewhere,

WILLIE B. COCHRAN,

defendant herein, being an agent of the City of Chicago, a local government that received in excess of \$10,000 in federal funds from October 1, 2011, through September 30, 2012, corruptly solicited and demanded, and accepted and agreed to accept, things of value from Individual A, namely a check for \$1500 with the payee portion blank, intending to be influenced and rewarded in connection with a business, transaction and series of transactions of the City of Chicago involving a thing of value of \$5000 or more, that is, past, continued, and future aldermanic support for Individual A's projects and those of his clients, including Project A;

In violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 666(a)(1)(B).

COUNT TWO

The SPECIAL JUNE 2015 GRAND JURY further charges:

1. The allegations in paragraph 1 of Count One of this Indictment are incorporated here.

2. Beginning in or around December 2011, and continuing to in or around January 2012, at Chicago, in the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, and elsewhere,

WILLIE B. COCHRAN,

defendant herein, obstructed, delayed, and affected commerce, by extortion, in that he obtained a \$1500 check with the payee portion blank from another person, namely Individual A, with that person's consent induced under color of official right and by the wrongful use of fear of economic harm;

In violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1951.

COUNT THREE

The SPECIAL JUNE 2015 GRAND JURY further charges:

1. At times material to this Indictment:
 - a. The allegations in paragraphs 1(a) through 1(c) of Count One are incorporated here.
 - b. Pursuant to the City of Chicago Municipal Code, the City of Chicago required a package goods license for the retail sale of alcoholic liquor enclosed in the original manufacturer sealed container.
 - c. Prior to April 15, 2015, Chicago Municipal Code Section 4-60-023 subsection 20.152 stated that “no additional package goods license shall be issued for any premises located . . . [o]n the west side of Cottage Grove Avenue, from Marquette Road to 68th Street.” This geographic area was located in the 20th Ward.
 - d. It was one of the functions of Aldermen to communicate aldermanic support to the Chicago City Council relating to amendments to Chicago Municipal Code section 4-60-023 in order to permit the issuance of package goods licenses to businesses in their respective wards, including by sponsoring and voting for such amendments in the City Council, which support was instrumental in securing passage of the amendments without the need to seek or obtain community support.
 - e. Individual B owned a liquor store located on South Cottage Grove Avenue between Marquette Avenue and 68th Street in the 20th Ward. In late 2014

and early 2015, Individual B sought to sell his liquor store to a buyer who would require a package goods license.

f. On April 15, 2015, the City Council of Chicago passed an amendment to Chicago Municipal Code Section 4-60-023 that was sponsored by defendant WILLIE B. COCHRAN and that omitted subsection 20.152, which therefore allowed the issuance of a package goods license for the premises located on the west side of Cottage Grove Avenue, from Marquette Road to 68th Street, including the liquor store owned by Individual B.

2. Beginning in or around December 2014, and continuing to in or around April 2015, at Chicago, in the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, and elsewhere,

WILLIE B. COCHRAN,

defendant herein, being an agent of the City of Chicago, a local government that received in excess of \$10,000 in federal funds from October 1, 2014, through September 30, 2015, corruptly solicited and demanded, and accepted and agreed to accept, things of value from Individual B, namely approximately \$3000 in cash, intending to be influenced and rewarded in connection with a business, transaction and series of transactions of the City of Chicago involving a thing of value of \$5000 or more, that is, an Alderman-sponsored amendment to Section 4-60-023 of the Municipal Code of Chicago to omit subsection 20.152 to allow additional package goods licenses on portions of South Cottage Grove Avenue located in the 20th Ward;

In violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 666(a)(1)(B).

COUNT FOUR

The SPECIAL JUNE 2015 GRAND JURY further charges:

1. The allegations in paragraph 1 of Count Three of this Indictment are incorporated here.

2. Beginning in or around December 2014, and continuing to in or around April 2015, at Chicago, in the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, and elsewhere,

WILLIE B. COCHRAN,

defendant herein, obstructed, delayed, and affected commerce, by extortion, in that he obtained approximately \$3000 in United States currency from another person, namely Individual B, with that person's consent induced under color of official right, and by the wrongful use of fear of economic harm;

In violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1951.

COUNT FIVE

The SPECIAL JUNE 2015 GRAND JURY further charges:

1. At times material to this Indictment:
 - a. The allegations in paragraphs 1(a) through 1(c) of Count One are incorporated here.
 - b. Defendant WILLIE B. COCHRAN was the sole signatory on JP Morgan Chase bank account *****0383 in the name of “20th Ward Activities Fund.” JP Morgan Chase issued debit cards for this account, ending 5569 and ending 8144.
2. Beginning in or around January 2010, and continuing to in or around April 2014, at Chicago, in the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, and elsewhere,

WILLIE B. COCHRAN,

defendant herein, knowingly devised, and intended to devise, and participated in a scheme to defraud donors to the 20th Ward Activities Fund, and to obtain money and property by means of materially false and fraudulent pretenses, representations, and promises, and concealment of materials facts, which scheme is further described below.

3. It was part of the scheme that defendant WILLIE B. COCHRAN misled donors by misrepresenting, and causing to be misrepresented, that money contributions to the 20th Ward Activities Fund would be used for charitable endeavors to help families and children living in the 20th Ward, including a summer

back-to-school picnic, a Valentine's Day event for senior citizens, and events during the holiday season each November and December when, in reality, COCHRAN used a significant portion of the money contributed by donors to the 20th Ward Activities Fund for his own personal use and expenses.

4. It was further part of the scheme that defendant WILLIE B. COCHRAN solicited donations from constituents seeking school supplies, warm jackets, and other clothing items for children in the 20th Ward in advance of the back-to-school picnic held annually in August. COCHRAN's solicitation also stated that he would accept monetary contributions to the 20th Ward Activities Fund in lieu of school supplies and children's clothing.

5. It was further part of the scheme that defendant WILLIE B. COCHRAN solicited donations from constituents seeking food and clothing items for families in the 20th Ward in advance of Thanksgiving and Christmas-related events on an annual basis. COCHRAN's solicitation also stated that he would accept monetary contributions to the 20th Ward Activities Fund in lieu of food and clothing items.

6. It was further part of the scheme that after fraudulently convincing constituents to donate money to the 20th Ward Activities Fund to be used for the charitable purposes he described, defendant WILLIE B. COCHRAN knowingly used monies in the 20th Ward Activities Fund ("the Fund") for his own benefit in various ways, such as:

a. using money in the Fund to pay approximately \$5,000 of his daughter's college tuition in August 2011;

b. withdrawing approximately \$25,000 from the Fund through ATMs in or near the vicinity of casinos where COCHRAN gambled; and

c. using money in the Fund to purchase items for use in his personal residence.

7. It was further part of the scheme that defendant WILLIE B. COCHRAN misrepresented, concealed, and hid and caused to be misrepresented, concealed, and hidden certain material facts, including the acts and purposes of the acts done in furtherance of the scheme.

8. On or about August 10, 2011, at Chicago, in the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division,

WILLIE B. COCHRAN,

defendant herein, for the purpose of executing the scheme, knowingly caused to be transmitted by wire communication in interstate commerce certain writings, signs, signals, and sounds, namely, data relating to the deposit of check number 1175 in the amount of \$500 from Company C to "20th Ward Activities Fund" into JP Morgan Chase bank account *****0383, which wire communication was routed through a server located in Delaware;

In violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1343.

COUNT SIX

The SPECIAL JUNE 2015 GRAND JURY further charges:

1. The allegations in paragraphs 1 through 15 of Count Five of this Indictment are incorporated here.

2. On or about August 16, 2011, at Chicago, in the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division,

WILLIE B. COCHRAN,

defendant herein, for the purpose of executing the scheme, knowingly caused to be transmitted by wire communication in interstate commerce certain writings, signs, signals, and sounds, namely, data relating to the deposit of check number 7478 in the amount of \$750 from Company D to “20th Ward Activities Fund” into JP Morgan Chase bank account *****0383, which wire communication was routed through a server located in Delaware;

In violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1343.

COUNT SEVEN

The SPECIAL JUNE 2015 GRAND JURY further charges:

1. The allegations in paragraphs 1 through 15 of Count Five of this Indictment are incorporated here.

2. On or about August 16, 2011, at Chicago, in the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division,

WILLIE B. COCHRAN,

defendant herein, for the purpose of executing the scheme, knowingly caused to be transmitted by wire communication in interstate commerce certain writings, signs, signals, and sounds, namely, data relating to the deposit of check number 1702 in the amount of \$500 from Company E to “20th Ward Activities Fund” into JP Morgan Chase bank account *****0383, which wire communication was routed through a server located in Delaware;

In violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1343.

COUNT EIGHT

The SPECIAL JUNE 2015 GRAND JURY further charges:

1. The allegations in paragraphs 1 through 15 of Count Five of this Indictment are incorporated here.

2. On or about August 16, 2011, at Chicago, in the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division,

WILLIE B. COCHRAN,

defendant herein, for the purpose of executing the scheme, knowingly caused to be transmitted by wire communication in interstate commerce certain writings, signs, signals, and sounds, namely, data relating to the deposit of check number 1827 in the amount of \$500 from Company F to “20th Ward Activities Fund” into JP Morgan Chase bank account *****0383, which wire communication was routed through a server located in Delaware;

In violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1343.

COUNT NINE

The SPECIAL JUNE 2015 GRAND JURY further charges:

1. The allegations in paragraphs 1 through 15 of Count Five of this Indictment are incorporated here.

2. On or about August 18, 2011, at Chicago, in the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division,

WILLIE B. COCHRAN,

defendant herein, for the purpose of executing the scheme, knowingly caused to be transmitted by wire communication in interstate commerce certain writings, signs, signals, and sounds, namely, data relating to the deposit of check number 1009 in the amount of \$200 from Individual G to “Willie B. Cochran—Activities” into JP Morgan Chase bank account *****0383, which wire communication was routed through a server located in Delaware;

In violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1343.

COUNT TEN

The SPECIAL JUNE 2015 GRAND JURY further charges:

1. The allegations in paragraphs 1 through 15 of Count Five of this Indictment are incorporated here.

2. On or about August 19, 2011, at Chicago, in the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division,

WILLIE B. COCHRAN,

defendant herein, for the purpose of executing the scheme, knowingly caused to be transmitted by wire communication in interstate commerce certain writings, signs, signals, and sounds, namely, data relating to the deposit of check number 16728 in the amount of \$3000 from Company H to “20th Ward Activities Fund” into JP Morgan Chase bank account *****0383, which wire communication was routed through a server located in Delaware;

In violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1343.

COUNT ELEVEN

The SPECIAL JUNE 2015 GRAND JURY further charges:

1. The allegations in paragraphs 1 through 15 of Count Five of this Indictment are incorporated here.

2. On or about September 22, 2011, at Chicago, in the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division,

WILLIE B. COCHRAN,

defendant herein, for the purpose of executing the scheme, knowingly caused to be transmitted by wire communication in interstate commerce certain writings, signs, signals, and sounds, namely, data relating to the deposit of check number 4064 in the amount of \$2000 from Company I to “20th Ward Activities Fund” into JP Morgan Chase bank account *****0383, which wire communication was routed through a server located in Delaware;

In violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1343.

COUNT TWELVE

The SPECIAL JUNE 2015 GRAND JURY further charges:

1. The allegations in paragraphs 1 through 15 of Count Five of this Indictment are incorporated here.

2. On or about December 20, 2012, at Chicago, in the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division,

WILLIE B. COCHRAN,

defendant herein, for the purpose of executing the scheme, knowingly caused to be transmitted by wire communication in interstate commerce certain writings, signs, signals, and sounds, namely, data relating to the deposit of check number 4430 in the amount of \$1000 from Company I to “20th Ward Activities Fund” into JP Morgan Chase bank account *****0383, which wire communication was routed through a server located in Delaware;

In violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1343.

COUNT THIRTEEN

The SPECIAL JUNE 2015 GRAND JURY further charges:

1. The allegations in paragraphs 1 through 15 of Count Five of this Indictment are incorporated here.

2. On or about January 9, 2012, at Chicago, in the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division,

WILLIE B. COCHRAN,

defendant herein, for the purpose of executing the scheme, knowingly caused to be transmitted by wire communication in interstate commerce certain writings, signs, signals, and sounds, namely, data relating to the deposit of check number 00033673 in the amount of \$500 from Company J to “20th Ward Activities Fund” into JP Morgan Chase bank account *****0383, which wire communication was routed through servers located in Delaware;

In violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1343.

COUNT FOURTEEN

The SPECIAL JUNE 2015 GRAND JURY further charges:

1. The allegations in paragraphs 1 through 15 of Count Five of this Indictment are incorporated here.

2. On or about June 27, 2013, at Chicago, in the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division,

WILLIE B. COCHRAN,

defendant herein, for the purpose of executing the scheme, knowingly caused to be transmitted by wire communication in interstate commerce certain writings, signs, signals, and sounds, namely, data relating to the deposit of check number 2575 in the amount of \$300 from Company K to “20th Ward” into JP Morgan Chase bank account *****0383, which wire communication was routed through a server located in Delaware;

In violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1343.

COUNT FIFTEEN

The SPECIAL JUNE 2015 GRAND JURY further charges:

1. The allegations in paragraphs 1 through 15 of Count Five of this Indictment are incorporated here.

2. On or about September 13, 2013, at Chicago, in the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division,

WILLIE B. COCHRAN,

defendant herein, for the purpose of executing the scheme, knowingly caused to be transmitted by wire communication in interstate commerce certain writings, signs, signals, and sounds, namely, data relating to the deposit of check number 3756 in the amount of \$500 from Company L to “20th Ward Activities Fund” into JP Morgan Chase bank account *****0383, which wire communication was routed through a server located in Delaware;

In violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1343.

FORFEITURE ALLEGATION

The SPECIAL JUNE 2015 GRAND JURY further alleges:

1. Upon conviction of an offense in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 666, 1343, and 1951, as set forth in this Indictment, defendant shall forfeit to the United States of America any property which constitutes and is derived from proceeds traceable to the offense, as provided in Title 18, United States Code, Section 981(a)(1)(C) and Title 28, United States Code, Section 2461(c), including at least approximately \$21,500.

2. If any of the property described above, as a result of any act or omission by a defendant: cannot be located upon the exercise of due diligence; has been transferred or sold to, or deposited with, a third party; has been placed beyond the jurisdiction of the Court; has been substantially diminished in value; or has been commingled with other property which cannot be divided without difficulty, the United States of America shall be entitled to forfeiture of substitute property, as provided in Title 21, United States Code Section 853(p).

A TRUE BILL:

FOREPERSON

UNITED STATES ATTORNEY