



*United States Attorney
District of New Jersey*

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**FORMER JERSEY CITY DEPUTY MAYOR SENTENCED TO THREE YEARS IN
PRISON FOR TAKING BRIBES IN EXCHANGE FOR OFFICIAL INFLUENCE**

NEWARK, N.J. – Former Jersey City Deputy Mayor Leona Beldini was sentenced today to 36 months in prison for accepting \$20,000 in illicit campaign contributions in exchange for her agreement to exercise her official influence and authority to obtain real estate development approvals, United States Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

Beldini, 75, of Jersey City, who also owns a real estate business, was convicted of two counts of bribery on February 11, 2010. The jury acquitted her of three counts of conspiring to commit and committing extortion under color of official right and one count of bribery.

In convicting Beldini, the jury found that she accepted \$20,000 in illicit campaign contributions that benefitted both herself and Mayor Jerramiah Healy, who was running for re-election during the Spring of 2009. Beldini was the treasurer of Healy's campaign fund, Healy for Mayor '09. In accepting the payments, Beldini agreed to exercise influence and official action to assist a cooperating witness (CW) with a purported development project on Garfield Avenue in Jersey City.

According to the evidence at trial:

Beldini met with the CW on four occasions at local Jersey City restaurants. During those meetings, Beldini not only agreed to accept illicit campaign contributions in exchange for her official assistance in expediting local government approvals, but also to conceal the name of the CW in connection both with his Garfield Avenue project and the illegal payments.

The initial \$10,000 payment benefitted the Jersey City Democratic Committee (JCDC), which sponsored "Broadway at the Beacon," a fundraiser Beldini organized. This payment was structured into four separate campaign contributions from "straw donors," individuals who agreed to write checks within the legal contribution limits to the JCDC and who were reimbursed with a portion of the corrupt payment. The second \$10,000 payment was similarly structured and directly benefitted Healy for Mayor '09. In a meeting at the Brownstone Diner in Jersey City on March 24, 2009, which was recorded by law enforcement, Beldini informed the cooperating witness that it was her practice to "put money into different funds so we can, when we need it, funnel it back into the mayor."

U.S. Attorney Fishman stated: "The sentence reflects the seriousness with which we view those who sell their offices for cash and it should serve as a warning to those who are thinking

about choosing that path.”

Federal Bureau of Investigation Special Agent in Charge Michael B. Ward said, “Today’s sentencing serves as yet another unfortunate reminder of the pervasiveness of corruption among certain public officials. In response, the FBI will continue to apply the necessary resources to aggressively identify and pursue those officials, regardless of the positions they hold.”

The investigation leading to Beldini’s guilty verdict and sentencing was part of a two-track undercover investigation into political corruption and money laundering that led to the arrest of 44 defendants in July 2009, and the charges against Beldini in August of that year. A Superseding Indictment was filed in November 2009.

Judge Linares continued Beldini’s release on a \$100,000 bond pending her surrender to U.S. Bureau of Prisons officials on or before August 2, 2010.

In addition to the prison term, Judge Linares sentenced Beldini to two years of supervised release and ordered her to pay a fine of \$30,000.

In determining an actual sentence, Judge Linares consulted the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which recommend sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, the defendant’s criminal history, if any, and other factors, including acceptance of responsibility. Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all of that time.

U.S. Attorney Fishman credited Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Michael B. Ward, and the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge William P. Offord, for the investigation leading to today’s sentence. Fishman also thanked the Monmouth County Prosecutor’s Office, under the direction of Prosecutor Luis A. Valentin, for its assistance.

The Government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Sandra L. Moser of the United States Attorney’s Office Special Prosecutions Division in Newark.

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Defense counsel: Brian J. Neary, Esq., Hackensack, New Jersey