

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Mar. 18, 2010

Jersey City Council Candidate LaVern Webb-Washington
Sentenced to 12 Months and a Day
for Taking \$15,000 in Corrupt Payments

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NEWARK – LaVern Webb-Washington, an unsuccessful candidate for City Council in Jersey City, was sentenced today to 12 months and a day of imprisonment for accepting \$15,000 in corrupt payments when she was running for office. In exchange for these payments, Webb-Washington agreed that if she were elected, she would use her position to help secure approvals on a Jersey City real estate development plan, U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman, announced.

U.S. District Judge Jose L. Linares also ordered Webb-Washington to serve two years of supervised release upon completion of her prison term. As a condition of her supervised release, Judge Linares ordered that Webb-Washington be barred from seeking public office. Judge Linares also ordered Webb-Washington to forfeit \$5,000, in addition to the \$10,000 Webb-Washington already returned to the Government prior to her sentencing. Judge Linares continued Webb-Washington's release on a \$50,000 bond pending her surrender to officials with the U.S. Bureau of Prisons scheduled for April 26, 2010.

Webb-Washington pleaded guilty before Judge Linares on October 8, 2009, to a one-count Information that charged her with conspiring to obstruct commerce by extortion under color of official right. At her plea hearing, Webb-Washington admitted that between March 2009 and May 2009, while seeking to win a City Council seat, she accepted three corrupt cash payments totaling \$15,000 from a cooperating witness.

Webb-Washington admitted that the payments were in exchange for her agreeing to exercise her future official assistance, as an anticipated member of the City Council. Specifically, Webb-Washington admitted that she took these payments from the cooperating witness in exchange for her promise that she would - if elected - use her future City Council position to assist the cooperating witness in obtaining certain development approvals for a planned development project on Garfield Avenue in Jersey City. Webb-Washington further admitted that she agreed that she would take an additional cash payment from the CW after the election.

Today's sentencing results from a two-track undercover FBI investigation into public corruption and international money laundering which resulted in the charging of forty-four individuals via Criminal Complaint on July 23, 2009.

In determining the 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 offenses, the defendants' criminal histories, if any, and other factors, including acceptance of responsibility. The Judge, however, had discretion and was not bound by those Guidelines in determining the sentence.

Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all of that time.

Fishman credited Special Agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Michael B. Ward, and the IRS Criminal Investigation Division, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge William P. Offord, for the investigation of Webb-Washington and the other defendants.

The case against LaVern Webb-Washington is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Maureen Nakly of the U.S. Attorney's Office, Special Prosecutions Division, in Newark.

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Defense counsel:

Lorraine Gauli-Rufo, Federal Public Defender's Office, Newark