

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Jersey City Deputy Mayor Guilty of Bribery Charges

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NEWARK – A federal jury today convicted suspended Jersey City Deputy Mayor Leona Beldini of two counts of bribery for accepting \$20,000 in illicit political contributions in connection with the May 2009 Jersey City mayoral race, U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

The jury acquitted Beldini, 74, of conspiracy to commit extortion under of official right, two counts of attempted extortion under color of official right and one additional bribery count.

“Once again, public officials are on notice that we will not permit them to turn public service into self-service,” said Fishman. “Today’s verdict is a credit to all those who have worked tirelessly on this complex investigation and prosecution.”

Beldini originally was arrested on a criminal complaint on the morning of July 23, 2009, along with 43 other individuals, resulting from a two-track federal investigation of public corruption and a high-volume, international money laundering conspiracy.

Edward Kahrer, Assistant Special Agent in Charge and head of the FBI's Public Corruption Program in Newark remarked: "The conviction of Ms. Beldini today is further evidence that the people of New Jersey will not tolerate those who use public office for personal gain."

The jury began deliberating at approximately 9:30 a.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 9 and returned a verdict at 3:30 p.m. on Feb. 11, 2010. U.S. District Judge Jose L. Linares, who presided over the nearly two-week trial, scheduled sentencing for June 1, 2010.

The case was tried by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Sandra L. Moser and Thomas R. Calcagni of the U.S. Attorney's Office Special Prosecutions Division.

In convicting Beldini, the jury found that Beldini, while the treasurer of the campaign committee Healy for Mayor ‘09 accepted \$20,000 in illicit campaign contributions benefitting Beldini and Mayor Healy. These payments were made in exchange for Beldini’s agreement to exercise official influence and action in favor of the government’s cooperating witness, Solomon Dwek, with real estate development projects, including one on Garfield Avenue in Jersey City, according to trial evidence and testimony.

Each of the two bribery counts carry a statutory maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a maximum fine of \$250,000 per count.

In determining an actual sentence, Judge Linares will consult the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, the defendant's criminal history, if any, and other factors. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in

determining a sentence.

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

Fishman credited Special Agents of the FBI Red Bank Resident Agency, under the direction of Acting Special Agent in Charge Kevin B. Cruise, in Newark, and the IRS Criminal Investigation Division, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge William P. Offord, for their commitment of resources and success in the Bid Rig investigations.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Sandra L. Moser and Thomas R. Calcagni of the U.S. Attorney's Office Special Prosecutions Division in Newark.

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Defense Counsel: Brian J. Neary, Esq., Hackensack