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FORMER CADDO JUDGE MICHAEL WALKER SENTENCED TO 10 YEARS IN PRISON FOR RACKETEERING

Bribe Payments Resulted in Bond Reductions and Lifting of Detainers

SHREVEPORT, La.: Former Caddo District Judge Michael Walker will spend the next 10 years in prison for accepting bribes in exchange for reducing criminal bail bonds and lifting probation detainers, United States Attorney Donald W. Washington announced. WALKER was sentenced today by United States District Judge S. Maurice Hicks. WALKER was also fined \$250,000.

As a result of an FBI investigation code-named "Broken Gavel," WALKER and co-defendant Vernon Claville were convicted by a jury last June of violating the Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) by engaging in a scheme to enrich themselves by extracting cash bribes from individuals with court business. Claville, a former Caddo Parish Juvenile Court Judge, is scheduled to be sentenced tomorrow. Both WALKER and CLAVILLE were immediately remanded into custody after the jury verdict and have been incarcerated while awaiting sentencing. Although they both appealed the detention order, it was affirmed by the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals last July.

Evidence at the trial proved that WALKER made himself available, in exchange for cash and other things of value, to quickly set bonds, reduce bonds, and remove probations holds for individuals who had business in his court. The FBI investigation included multiple wiretaps, and jurors listened to secretly recorded telephone conversations between WALKER and a representative of A Instant Bail Bond, LLC, a Shreveport based company, who arranged to pay WALKER cash bribes in exchange for favorable action regarding A-Instant's clients. The jurors also viewed secretly recorded videotapes of WALKER receiving the cash bribes at different locations, including local casinos.

Shortly after the jury verdict, WALKER retired from the bench.

United States Attorney Washington stated: “Our judicial system is designed to administer justice fairly and equally for all citizens. Our system of justice is not designed for judges to enrich themselves by ruling in favor of whoever is willing to pay them bribe money. Mr. Walker received the sentence he deserved for corrupting his high office as a judge, and violating the trust of the citizens who put him there.”

FBI Special Agent in Charge David Welker stated: “Those charged with protecting the nation have a special responsibility to maintain their oath of loyalty to the citizens of this state and this country. These two defendants betrayed the trust bestowed on them as judges in the state of Louisiana. Corruption is found at all levels of government. The FBI will continue to make it a high priority in rooting it out and bringing to justice those individuals.”

“Broken Gavel” was investigated by the FBI Shreveport Resident Agency. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Alec Van Hook, First Assistant U.S. Attorney Bill Flanagan, and U.S. Attorney Donald W. Washington.

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