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PRESS RELEASE

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Former HUD Employee Pleads Guilty To Accepting Bribes from Government Contractor Admits Taking Gifts in Return for Preferential Treatment on Contracts

WASHINGTON – Kevin Jones, 48, a former contract oversight specialist with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), pled guilty today to a federal bribery charge stemming from a scheme in which he provided non-public information about pending HUD contracts to a business owner in exchange for tickets to sporting events, travel, and cash.

The announcement was made by U.S. Attorney Jessie K. Liu, Nancy McNamara, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI's Washington Field Office, and Reginald O. Sessoms, Special Agent in Charge, Special Investigations Division, HUD Office of Inspector General.

Jones, of Laurel, Md., pled guilty in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. The charge carries a statutory maximum of 15 years in prison and potential financial penalties. Under federal sentencing guidelines, Jones faces a likely range of 30 to 37 months in prison and a fine of up to \$100,000. He also has agreed to pay a forfeiture money judgment of \$50,302, representing the value of the gifts that he received in the scheme.

The Honorable Randolph D. Moss scheduled sentencing for June 13, 2019.

According to a statement of offense signed as part of the plea, Jones began work at HUD in 1999. His responsibilities included serving as the technical point of contact for certain contracts and reviewing contractor performance. By virtue of his position, he had access to bid, proposal, and source selection information about a number of HUD contracts.

The bribery charge involves Jones's dealings with Charles Thomas, the sole owner and president of a company in Maryland that provided technology services to agencies of the federal government and educational services to public school children in the Washington, D.C. area.

Between at least 2010 and 2018, according to the statement of offense, Thomas provided Jones with tickets to sporting events, travel, and cash in exchange for Jones providing Thomas and his company with non-public information about pending HUD contracts. In particular, the information and recommendations that Jones provided gave Thomas an unfair competitive advantage in obtaining two contracts valued at more than \$4.5 million. Jones himself approved invoices totaling nearly \$3.8 million for work done under one of the two contracts.

According to the statement of offense, from 2010 through 2017, Thomas and his company provided Jones with a variety of gifts and benefits, including more than \$17,000 worth of tickets to Washington Redskins games and three Super Bowls; \$1,700 in Washington Wizards tickets, more than \$3,200 in hotel accommodations; more than \$3,600 in travel expenses, more than \$13,000 in cash and checks, meals, a camera, and a pair of basketball shoes.

In a related prosecution, another former HUD employee, LaFonda Lewis, pled guilty in January 2019 to providing non-public information to Thomas in exchange for money, tickets to sporting events, and other things of value. As part of her plea, she has agreed to pay a forfeiture money judgment of \$23,055, representing the illegal proceeds. Lewis was a former supervisory contract oversight specialist. Lewis, 57, of Lusby, Md., is to be sentenced on March 28, 2019.

Thomas, 45, of Lusby, Md., pled guilty in May 2018 to one count of conspiracy to commit bribery and two counts of conspiracy to pay gratuities and violate the Procurement Integrity Act. Thomas is awaiting sentencing. In his guilty plea, Thomas admitted to paying bribes to the two HUD employees as well as to an employee of the District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) in return for payments on contracts involving that agency.

The former District of Columbia employee, Shauntell Harley, 49, of Washington, D.C., was sentenced in July 2018 to 56 months in prison for accepting bribes in return for clearing the way for payments to be made to Thomas and another businessman.

In announcing the plea, U.S. Attorney Liu, Assistant Director in Charge McNamara, and Special Agent in Charge Sessoms commended the work of those who investigated the case from the FBI's Washington Field Office, HUD's Office of the Inspector General, and the Office of the Inspector General for the District of Columbia.

They acknowledged the efforts of those who worked on the case from the U.S. Attorney's Office, including Paralegal Specialist Joshua Fein and former Paralegal Specialist Kristy Penny. Finally, they expressed appreciation for the work of Assistant U.S. Attorney Peter C. Lallas, who is investigating and prosecuting the matter.