



The United States Attorney's Office

Central District of California



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GOVERNMENT ATTORNEY SENTENCED TO NEARLY 18 YEARS IN PRISON FOR TAKING HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS IN BRIBES FROM IMMIGRANTS SEEKING STATUS IN U.S.

LOS ANGELES – A senior attorney with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was sentenced this morning to 212 months in federal prison for taking nearly one-half million dollars in bribes from immigrants who were promised immigration benefits that would allow them to remain in the United States.

ICE Assistant Chief Counsel Constantine Peter Kallas, 40, of Alta Loma, received the 17½-year sentence from United States District Judge Terry J. Hatter Jr.

In addition to the prison term, Judge Hatter ordered Kallas to pay \$296,865 in restitution after fraudulently receiving worker's compensation benefits.

"Mr. Kallas has received one of the longest sentences ever seen in a public corruption case," said United States Attorney André Birotte Jr. "Mr. Kallas took in hundreds of thousands of dollars in bribes – money he obtained by exploiting his knowledge of the immigration system. The lengthy sentence reflects the seriousness of the crimes, which were a wholesale violation of the public trust."

Following a three-week trial, a federal jury in April 2010 convicted Kallas of three dozen felony counts – conspiracy, six counts of bribery, two counts of obstruction of justice, seven counts of fraud and misuse of entry documents, three counts of aggravated identity theft, nine counts of making false statements to the Department of Labor, four counts of making false statements to obtain federal employee compensation, and four counts of tax evasion.

"This case presents an epic display of a public official's greed," prosecutors wrote in a sentencing memorandum filed with the court.

"As a corrupt prosecutor, [Kallas] calculatingly terrorized the idea of justice and the concept of public service," the memorandum continued. "[Kallas] carried out his crime scheme through elaborate forms of manipulation, lies, and obstructive conduct."

Kallas has been in a federal jail since August 2008, about two months after he was arrested by special agents with the Federal Bureau of Investigation at the San Manuel Indian Bingo and Casino in Highland, California. Kallas was arrested after he took a \$20,000 bribe from an immigrant during an incident that was captured on casino surveillance cameras and shown to the jury.

The June 2008 bribe was the last in a series of incidents in which Kallas and his wife, Maria, told illegal aliens that Kallas was an immigration official – either an immigration judge or some other type of high-level immigration official – and that Kallas could obtain immigration benefits for the aliens in exchange for bribes.

Steven Martinez, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI in Los Angeles, stated: "Today's lengthy sentence fits the significant crimes committed by Mr. Kallas and will undoubtedly deter others planning to abuse government power. Mr. Kallas was entrusted to help immigrants abide by the law, but instead he enabled them in breaking the law, by greedily taking advantage of their desperation."

During a five-year period that ended with his arrest, the Kallas family accepted payments from aliens that totaled at least \$425,854.

Kallas took bribes from some illegal aliens who were offered "jobs" at companies Kallas and his wife had set up. As part of the scheme, Kallas filed fraudulent labor condition applications with the Department of Labor that falsely claimed the companies had offered employment to the aliens.

On December 16, 2006, Kallas appeared in Immigration Court and, without any authorization, used his position as an immigration prosecutor to ask a judge to dismiss removal proceedings against an immigrant.

Kallas misused the identities of several real persons by, among things, putting their names on fraudulent documents or on nominee bank accounts used to hide money from the Internal Revenue Service.

In some cases, Kallas attempted to solve immigrants' problems by simply making their files disappear. When investigators searched the Kallas residence in June 2008, they discovered a hidden floor safe that contained more than \$177,000 in cash and two dozen official immigration files.

Kallas also illegally obtained more money through workers compensation fraud and tax evasion, claiming total disability and zero income, even as he was conducting the elaborate bribery and fraud scheme.

Daniel R. Petrole, Acting Inspector General, United States Department of Labor, said: "Today's sentencing highlights our efforts to investigate fraud against the Department of Labor. The defendant, who is a former Immigration and Customs Enforcement attorney, used shell companies to falsely petition aliens for employment visas. Moreover, he filed for full federal disability benefits for work-related injuries, yet was receiving thousands of dollars in income from his employment scheme. My office and our law enforcement partners remain committed toward combating these types of crimes."

According to court documents, the bank records for the Kallases showed that, beyond his salary, approximately \$950,000 had been deposited into the couple's bank accounts since 2000.

"Corrupt public officials are disgraceful and reprehensible," noted Leslie P. DeMarco, Special Agent in Charge of IRS - Criminal Investigation's Los Angeles Field Office. "The crimes committed by Constantine Kallas – including bribery, tax evasion, obstruction of justice, false statements to government agencies, identity theft and workers compensation fraud – violated the trust placed in him as a public official. Today's sentencing of Mr. Kallas to 212 months in federal prison, a significant sentence by any measure, demonstrates IRS - Criminal Investigation's resolve to bring our financial expertise to bear and vigorously investigate public officials who set aside their duty for their own personal financial gain."

Terri Tollefson, Special Agent in Charge for the ICE Office of Professional Responsibility, West, stated: "This sentence serves as a sobering warning about the consequences of violating the public's trust. ICE played a pivotal role in the investigation that led to these criminal charges, and we will continue to hold our employees to the highest standards of professional conduct. Guarding against illegal or unethical behavior is not an option; it is an obligation we have to the people we serve."

Maria Kallas, 41, also of Alta Loma, pleaded guilty to conspiracy, bribery and conspiracy to commit money laundering in November 2009. United States District Judge Robert J. Timlin is scheduled to sentence her on May 2.

Kallas joined ICE's predecessor agency in June 1998, and he has been on unpaid leave since January 2007.

The case against the Kallases was investigated by ICE's Office of Professional Responsibility, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, IRS - Criminal Investigation, and the United States Department of Labor's Office of Inspector General.

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