

official positions within DOE to collect payments from bus company owners in exchange for various benefits relating to OPT business. For example, the defendants took cash payments from bus company owners to falsely classify certain bus routes as "extended" routes -- which were more costly to the DOE -- and in connection with the allocation of certain DOE bus routes to those companies. The defendants also collected payments in exchange for favorable treatment relating to violations uncovered during safety inspections of school buses, and advance notice of school bus safety inspections that were supposed to be unannounced. In some instances, the defendants knew that the bus company owners were making payments in the belief that they would receive improper benefits in exchange, but the defendants could not in fact deliver those benefits. In other instances, the payments were not connected to any particular benefit, but were intended to secure the goodwill of the defendants.

The defendants and other OPT employees collected cash payments from bus company owners, ranging from several hundred dollars per year from certain bus company owners, to tens of thousands of dollars per year, from other bus company owners. The Indictment seeks forfeiture from CREMIN, ORTIZ, SMITH, and SOKOL, in the amount of \$1,000,000.

If convicted of the charges alleged in the Indictment, the defendants each face a maximum sentence of 55 years in prison: 20 years each on the extortion and extortion conspiracy charges; 10 years on the bribery charge; and 5 years on the bribery conspiracy charge.

Mr. GARCIA praised the work of the FBI, the U.S. Department of Labor -- Office of Inspector General, the U.S. Department of Labor -- Office of Labor-Management Standards, and the New York Police Department, as well as the Special Commissioner of Investigation for the New York City School District. Mr. GARCIA said that the investigation is continuing.

Assistant United States Attorney ELIE HONIG is in charge of the prosecution.

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