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Department of Justice Press Release

For Immediate Release

November 13, 2009

United States Attorney's Office**Eastern District of Virginia****Contact: (703) 299-3700**

Former Congressman William J. Jefferson Sentenced to 13 Years in Prison for Bribery and Other Charges

Former U.S. Congressman William J. Jefferson, 62, of New Orleans, La., was sentenced today to 13 years in prison, followed by three years of supervised release, for using his office to corruptly solicit bribes. Jefferson was also ordered to forfeit more than \$470,000.

"The court's sentence today reaffirms the principle that all people—no matter what their title or position—are equal before the law," said Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Mythili Raman. "In a stunning betrayal of the public's trust, former Congressman Jefferson repeatedly used his public office for private gain. The lengthy prison sentence imposed on Mr. Jefferson today is a stark reminder to all public officials that the consequences of accepting bribes can and will be severe."

"This sentence should be a clear signal that our society will not tolerate bribery; it's not just another cost of doing business in government," said Neil H. MacBride, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia. "Mr. Jefferson's repeated attempts to sell his office caused significant damage to the public's trust in our elected leaders. This sentence will begin to repair that damage and to restore that trust."

On Aug. 5, 2009, Jefferson was convicted by a federal jury in Alexandria, Va., of 11 charged counts, including conspiracy to commit bribery, honest services wire fraud and to violate the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA), as well as substantive convictions of bribery, honest services by wire fraud and a violation of the Racketeer Influenced Corrupt Organization Act. Jefferson was acquitted on three counts of honest services wire fraud, an obstruction of justice charge and of violating the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.

According to evidence at trial, from August 2000 to August 2005, Jefferson used his position as an elected member of the U.S. House of Representatives to corruptly seek, solicit and direct that things of value be paid to himself and his family members in exchange for his performance of official acts to advance the interests of people and businesses who offered him the bribes. The things of value, according to evidence at trial, included hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of bribes in the form of payments from monthly fees or retainers, consulting fees, percentage shares of revenues and profits, flat fees for items sold and stock ownership in the companies seeking his official assistance.

Evidence at trial showed that Jefferson performed a wide range of official acts in return for things of value, including leading official business delegations to Africa, corresponding with U.S. and foreign government officials, and utilizing congressional staff members to promote businesses and businesspersons. The business ventures that Jefferson sought to promote included telecommunications deals in Nigeria, Ghana and elsewhere; oil concessions in Equatorial Guinea; satellite transmission contracts in Botswana, Equatorial Guinea and the Republic of Congo; and development of different plants and facilities in Nigeria.

Others involved in this scheme included Vernon L. Jackson, a Louisville, Ky., businessman, and Brett M. Pfeffer, a former congressional staff member for Jefferson. Both men pleaded guilty to charges of conspiracy to commit bribery and the payment of bribes to a public official and were sentenced to 87 months and 96 months in prison, respectively.

This case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Mark D. Lytle and Rebeca H. Bellows of the Eastern District of Virginia and Assistant Chief Charles E. Duross of the Criminal Division's Fraud Section. The case was investigated by the FBI's Washington Field Office, with assistance of the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network.

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