



U.S. Department of Justice

United States Attorney
District of Maryland

Stuart M. Goldberg
Acting United States Attorney

Vickie E. LeDuc
Public Information Officer

36 S. Charles Street
Fourth Floor
Baltimore, Maryland 21201-2692

410-209-4800
TTY/TDD:410-962-4462
410-209-4885
FAX 410-962-3091
Vickie.LeDuc@usdoj.gov

November 24, 2008

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**CONTACT AUSA VICKIE E. LEDUC or
MARCIA MURPHY at (410) 209-4885**

**FORMER DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE OFFICIAL SENTENCED FOR CONFLICT OF
INTEREST REGARDING LOBBYING MATTERS**

Washington, D.C. - U.S. District Judge Ellen Segal Huvelle sentenced Robert E. Coughlin II, age 36, former Deputy Director of the Office of Intergovernmental and Public Liaison at the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), today to 30 days in a halfway house, for a conflict of interest in connection with assistance he provided to a lobbyist and law/lobbying firm in matters that were before DOJ in return for a stream of things of value such as sports and concert tickets, meals at upscale restaurants and golf, announced Acting United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Stuart M. Goldberg and Department of Justice Inspector General Glenn A. Fine. Judge Huvelle ordered that Coughlin pay the cost of the halfway house and a fine of \$2,000; perform 200 hours of community service; and be subject to supervised release for three years.

In March 2001, Coughlin was hired at DOJ as a Special Assistant to the Assistant Attorney General for Legislative Affairs. Coughlin was promoted in May 2002 to Deputy Director of the Office of Intergovernmental and Public Liaison (OIPL).

According to the court documents, Coughlin had known Lobbyist A since 1992 when they worked together on Capitol Hill. Lobbyist A worked for Lobbyist B, who ran the government relations practice at their law/lobbying firm.

From 2001 to October 2003, among other things Coughlin provided Lobbyist A with: internal DOJ deliberations regarding a bill impacting a client of Lobbyist A; and information as to the status and responsibilities of certain DOJ officials, including which officials were political appointees who would be inclined to assist Lobbyist A and his firm. Coughlin contacted DOJ officials to obtain information for Lobbyist A about a land dispute between two Indian tribes; a consent decree between a client of Lobbyist A's firm and a competing company; and the purchase of a company by another. Coughlin also agreed to attend and attended meetings between Lobbyist A, his client(s) and other DOJ officials and a dinner meeting Coughlin attended in his official DOJ capacity, which Lobbyist A arranged "to fill [the client's] schedule with meetings."

Coughlin also participated in a campaign by Lobbyist A and his firm to obtain a \$16.3 million grant for a tribal client to build a jail. As of March 2001, DOJ had only approved \$9 million in grant funds. Coughlin identified the DOJ official at the Office of Legislative Affairs who handled the tribal-jail-grant issue as one whose political leanings might not be favorable to

Lobbyist A. He offered that if Lobbyist A would rather not have that DOJ official attend an upcoming meeting on this issue, he would “take care of it.” After the initial meeting attended by the DOJ official, that official had no further involvement and Lobbyist A sent all OLA-related communications regarding the issue to Coughlin. In an April 24, 2001 email, after dining at Lobbyist A’s expense, Coughlin offered to help Lobbyist A come up with a strategy to overturn the DOJ decision. Coughlin wrote to Lobbyist A:

Let’s talk some more about that [tribal-jail-grant] money. I know we touch[ed] on it Thursday night [at dinner at Olives,] but maybe we could come [up] with some strategy in order to make sure they get the rest of the money....

Coughlin set up a meeting with a “friendly” DOJ official and with others involved in the grant application decision, and met with those officials himself. He also updated Lobbyist A on the status of the application, responses he had received from the Office of Justice Programs official and the prospects for a reversal of the decision. On January 31, 2002, DOJ reversed its prior decision and awarded \$16.3 million to Lobbyist A’s tribal client for construction of the jail.

During the period Coughlin was assisting Lobbyist A and his firm, Lobbyist A provided things of value to Coughlin including meals and drinks on about 25 occasions at upscale bars and restaurants in Washington, D.C., about 20 tickets to seven sporting events, five tickets to three concerts and a round of golf. For example, in February 2003 after Coughlin forwarded a request from Lobbyist A to DOJ employees for an expedited review of an application to admit non-immigrant students to a school owned by Lobbyist B, and the expedited review was granted, Coughlin accepted drinks from Lobbyist A and then requested eight Washington Wizards basketball tickets. Lobbyist A gave him eight third-row floor tickets. Coughlin failed to report these items as gifts on his financial disclosure forms for 2001 through 2003. At today’s sentencing, Judge Huvelle determined that the total value of the benefits Coughlin received is \$4,800.

In March and April 2002, at the same time that Coughlin was assisting Lobbyist A with the tribal grant application and other matters, Coughlin also discussed with Lobbyist A possible employment at his firm. No formal offer was extended by the firm and Coughlin was promoted within DOJ to become Deputy Director of the OIPL in May 2002.

In November 2003, Coughlin left his position at OIPL for a temporary assignment and was no longer able to assist in Lobbyist A’s efforts. Lobbyist A abruptly curtailed buying him meals, drinks and tickets, only to resume the relationship as soon as Coughlin returned to his employment with DOJ in Washington, D.C.

The U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Maryland was assigned to this investigation after the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Columbia was recused. Stuart M. Goldberg, the First Assistant in Maryland was asked to serve as Acting United States Attorney in the inquiry, and this case is being handled by Assistant United States Attorney Michael J. Leotta. The Department’s Office of the Inspector General investigated these allegations because they related to a Justice Department employee, with assistance from the Federal Bureau of Investigation.