

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Former Arkansas State Senator Sentenced for Role in Bribery Scheme**

A former Arkansas state senator was sentenced yesterday to four years and two months in prison in the Western District of Missouri for accepting multiple bribes in connection with a multi-district investigation spanning the Eastern and Western Districts of Arkansas and the Western District of Missouri.

Pursuant to his global plea agreement, Jeremy Hutchinson, 48, of Little Rock, pleaded guilty on June 25, 2019, in the Eastern District of Arkansas to filing a false tax return; pleaded guilty on June 25, 2019, to an information filed in the Western District of Arkansas to conspiracy to commit federal program bribery; and pleaded guilty in the Western District of Missouri on July 8, 2019, to conspiracy to commit federal program bribery. On Feb. 3, Hutchinson [was sentenced](#) to three years and 10 months in prison for his convictions in the Eastern District of Arkansas and Western District of Arkansas. His sentence in the Western District of Missouri will run consecutive to the previous sentence for a total of eight years in prison.

According to court documents in connection with his plea in the Western District of Missouri, Hutchinson was hired by then-chief operating officer Bontiea Goss as outside counsel for Preferred Family Healthcare Inc. (formerly known as Alternative Opportunities Inc.), a Springfield, Missouri-based healthcare charity. In exchange for payments and legal work, Hutchinson performed official acts on behalf of Preferred Family Healthcare, including holding up agency budgets and drafting and voting on legislation. Preferred Family Healthcare paid Hutchinson more than \$350,000 in monthly retainer payments from May 2014 until 2017.

In 2022, Preferred Family Healthcare agreed to pay more than \$8 million in forfeiture and restitution to the federal government and the state of Arkansas under the terms of a non-prosecution agreement, in which the company admitted to the criminal conduct of its former officers and employees.

Several former executives from the charity, former members of the Arkansas state legislature, and others have pleaded guilty in federal court as part of the long-running, multi-jurisdiction investigation, including the following:

- Former Chief Operating Officer Bontiea Goss, previously of Springfield, Missouri, [pleaded guilty in September 2022](#) to her role in a conspiracy to commit bribery concerning programs receiving federal funds.
- Former Chief Financial Officer Tommy “Tom” Ray Goss, husband of Bontiea Goss, and also previously of Springfield, Missouri, [pleaded guilty in September 2022](#) to participating in the conspiracy by embezzling funds from the charity, as well as by paying bribes and kickbacks to elected public officials in Arkansas. Tom Goss also pleaded guilty to one count of aiding and assisting in the preparation and presentation of a false tax return.

- Former Chief Executive Officer Marilyn Luann Nolan of Springfield, Missouri, [pleaded guilty in November 2018](#) to her role in a conspiracy to embezzle and misapply the funds of a charitable organization that received federal funds.
- Former Director of Operations and Executive Vice President Robin Raveendran of Little Rock, Arkansas, [pleaded guilty in June 2019](#) to conspiracy to commit bribery concerning programs receiving federal funds.
- Former executive and head of clinical operations Keith Fraser Noble of Rogersville, Missouri, [pleaded guilty in September 2019](#) to concealment of a known felony.
- Former employee and head of operations and lobbying in Arkansas Milton Russell Cranford, aka Rusty, of Rogers, Arkansas, was sentenced to seven years in federal prison after pleading guilty to one count of federal program bribery.
- Political consultant Donald Andrew Jones, aka D.A. Jones, of Willingboro, New Jersey, [pleaded guilty in December 2017](#) to his role in a conspiracy to steal from an organization that receives federal funds.
- Former Arkansas State Representative Eddie Wayne Cooper of Melbourne, Arkansas, [pleaded guilty in February 2018](#) to conspiracy to embezzle more than \$4 million from Preferred Family Healthcare.
- Former Arkansas State Senator and State Representative Henry “Hank” Wilkins IV was [sentenced in January 2023](#) for his role in a conspiracy to commit federal program bribery and devising a scheme and artifice to defraud and deprive the citizens of the state of Arkansas of their right to honest services.

Assistant Attorney General Kenneth A. Polite, Jr. of the Justice Department’s Criminal Division, U.S. Attorney Jonathan D. Ross for the Eastern District of Arkansas, U.S. Attorney David Clay Fowlkes for the Western District of Arkansas, U.S. Attorney Teresa A. Moore for the Western District of Missouri, Assistant Director Luis Quesada of the FBI’s Criminal Investigative Division, Special Agent in Charge Charles Dayoub of the FBI Kansas City Field Office, Special Agent in Charge James A. Dawson of the FBI Little Rock Field Office, and Acting Special Agent in Charge Thomas F. Murdock of the IRS Criminal Investigation (IRS-CI) St. Louis Field Office made the announcement.

The FBI, IRS-CI, the Offices of the Inspectors General from the Departments of Justice, Labor, and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation investigated the cases.

Senior Litigation Counsel Marco A. Palmieri, Director of Enforcement & Litigation for the Election Crimes Branch Sean F. Mulryne, and Trial Attorney Jacob Steiner of the Criminal Division’s Public Integrity Section; Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephanie Mazzanti for the Eastern District of Arkansas; Supervisory Assistant U.S. Attorney Randall Eggert and Assistant U.S. Attorney Shannon T. Kempf for the Western District of Missouri; and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Aaron L. Jennen and Steven M. Mohlhenrich for the Western District of Arkansas are prosecuting the separate criminal cases. Former Assistant U.S. Attorney Patrick Harris for the Eastern District of Arkansas and former Assistant U.S. Attorney Ben Wulff for the Western District of Arkansas provided significant assistance.