

PRESS NOTICE

UNITED STATES ATTORNEY DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA

1441 Main Street, Suite 500 * Columbia, SC 29201 * (803) 929-3000

July 3, 2014

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT PERSON: J. D. Rowell
(803) 730-5394
jd.rowell@usdoj.gov

PINSON GUILTY OF RACKETEERING

COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA – The United States Attorney’s Office announced that a jury returned guilty verdicts in the case of *United States v. JONATHAN PINSON*. The jury considered 45 counts of a Superseding Indictment charging JONATHAN PINSON, age 44, of Greenville, South Carolina with various violations of federal law, including §18 USC §1962(d) (commonly called a RICO conspiracy), theft of federal funds, mail fraud, wire fraud, money laundering, making false statements, extortion under color of law and state law bribery. The Superseding Indictment specifically alleged that PINSON used his position as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of South Carolina State University (SCSU) to commit illegal acts on behalf of the enterprise. Co-defendant, ERIC ROBINSON, age 44, of Greenville was acquitted of 7 counts in which he was charged.

The jury considered evidence that PINSON was engaged in four different schemes. One scheme revolved around the 2011 homecoming concert at SCSU and PINSON’s efforts to steer the concert promotion contract to his close friend and former SCSU roommate, ROBINSON, in exchange for a kickback.

Other schemes included PINSON’s theft of government funds earmarked for the installation of a diaper plant in Marion County. Evidence showed that proceeds from the grant, intended to create jobs in rural Marion County, were instead pocketed by PINSON and his associates, Lance Wright, Tony Williams, and Phil Mims, each of whom has pled guilty to charges related to the fraud.

PINSON was also convicted of theft of government funds received from a 10 million dollar American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) grant (commonly known as stimulus money) intended for the development known as the Village at Rivers Edge (VRE).

In the final scheme PINSON again used his position as Chairman of the Board of SCSU to influence officials at SCSU to purchase land known as "Sportsman's Retreat". The seller of the property, Richard Zahn, PINSON's business partner, testified that he agreed to pay a kickback to PINSON in the form of a new Porsche Cayenne, an SUV valued at approximately 90 thousand dollars.

During the two and one-half week trial, the Government called twenty witnesses, introduced approximately 200 exhibits and played 118 secretly recorded telephone calls. The calls, authorized by a court-ordered wiretap, covered from July 21 to November 20, 2011.

The case was investigated by agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), State Law Enforcement Division (SLED), Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Inspector General (HUD-OIG) and Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigations (IRS-CI). Assistant United States Attorneys Nancy C. Wicker, Jane B. Taylor, J.D. Rowell, and T. DeWayne Pearson of the Columbia office prosecuted this and other related cases stemming from this investigation.

PINSON will be sentenced at a later date after the United States Probation Office has completed their presentence investigation and report.

#####