



# Department of Justice

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**CONGRESSMAN WILLIAM JEFFERSON INDICTED ON BRIBERY,  
RACKETEERING, MONEY LAUNDERING, OBSTRUCTION OF JUSTICE,  
AND RELATED CHARGES**

WASHINGTON – United States Congressman William J. Jefferson was indicted today by a federal grand jury on charges including bribery and racketeering for allegedly using his office to corruptly solicit bribes and for paying bribes to a foreign official, Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division and U.S. Attorney Chuck Rosenberg for the Eastern District of Virginia announced today.

The 16-count indictment, returned by a federal grand jury in Alexandria, Va., charges Jefferson with solicitation of bribes, honest services wire fraud, money laundering, obstruction of justice, violating the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, racketeering, and conspiracy. The indictment alleges that from in or about August 2000 through in or about August 2005, Jefferson, while serving as an elected member of the U.S. House of Representatives, used his position and his office to corruptly seek, solicit and direct that things of value be paid to Jefferson 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 allegedly sought and/or received by Jefferson on behalf of his business interests and relatives 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.

The official acts allegedly undertaken by Jefferson included leading official business delegations to Africa, corresponding with U.S. and foreign government officials, and utilizing congressional staff members to promote businesses and businesspersons. Business ventures that Congressman 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.

“The Department of Justice is committed to enforcing the public corruption laws designed to ensure the integrity of our government,” said Assistant Attorney General Fisher. “The Department will continue to hold public officials accountable for corrupt acts such as the bribery schemes outlined in today’s indictment.”

“The schemes charged are complex, but the essence of this case is simple: Mr. Jefferson corruptly traded on his good office, and on the Congress where he served as a Member of the United States House of Representatives, to enrich himself and his family through a pervasive pattern of fraud, bribery and corruption that spanned many years and two continents,” said U.S. Attorney Rosenberg.

“The FBI has made combating public corruption its top criminal investigative priority because American citizens deserve honest and ethical public officials representing their interest,” said Assistant Director Kenneth W. Kaiser, FBI Criminal Investigative Division. “As it is alleged, Congressman Jefferson violated the public’s trust and used his official position and office as a RICO enterprise to corruptly solicit bribes, to pay off a foreign official, and to illegally benefit from overseas business transactions during a five-year period. The FBI will continue to work with our local, state, federal and international partners to combat public corruption across all levels of government as no corrupt public servant is exempt from FBI scrutiny.”

The indictment alleges that Jefferson knowingly conspired with Vernon L. Jackson, a Louisville, Ky., businessman, and Brett M. Pfeffer, a former Jefferson congressional staff member, and others as part of the bribery and corruption scheme. Jefferson allegedly discussed and solicited bribes in return for being influenced in the performance of certain official acts, including receiving things of value from iGate, Jackson’s company. According to the indictment, Jefferson also corruptly sought bribes from an individual identified in the indictment as a Cooperating Witness (CW) to be paid to family members. The indictment alleges, for example, that Jefferson required 5 percent to 7 percent of the CW’s newly formed Nigerian company be given to members of Jefferson’s family in exchange for his assistance. Jefferson allegedly made the request of the CW in December 2004 during a meeting in a congressional dining room.

The indictment further alleges that Jefferson violated the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act by allegedly offering, promising and making payments to a foreign official to advance the various business endeavors in which he and his family had financial interest. Jefferson was allegedly responsible for negotiating, offering and delivering payments of bribes to the official identified in the indictment as “Nigerian Official A.”

According to the indictment, on or about July 18, 2005, Jefferson met with Nigerian Official A at the official’s residence in Potomac, Md., and offered Official A a bribe to induce him to use his position to assist in obtaining commitments from NITEL, the government-controlled main telecommunications service provider in Nigeria. On or before Aug. 3, 2005, at his residence in Washington, D.C., Jefferson allegedly secreted in his freezer \$90,000 of the \$100,000 in cash provided by the CW as part of the front-end bribe payment to Nigerian Official A. The cash was separated into \$10,000 increments, wrapped in aluminum foil, and concealed inside various frozen food containers.

Jefferson faces a maximum of 235 years in prison if convicted on all counts. Jackson was sentenced to 87 months in prison after pleading guilty to charges of conspiracy to commit

bribery and the payment of bribes to a public official. Pfeffer was sentenced to 96 months in prison after pleading guilty to charges of conspiracy to commit bribery and aiding and abetting the solicitation of bribes by a member of Congress.

The case is being prosecuted by Mark D. Lytle and Rebeca H. Bellows, Assistant U.S. Attorneys, Eastern District of Virginia and Trial Attorney Charles E. Duross of the Fraud Section of the Criminal Division at the U.S. Department of Justice. The case is being investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, with the assistance of the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN).

Criminal indictments are only charges and not evidence of guilt. A defendant is presumed to be innocent until and unless proven guilty.

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