



U.S. Department of Justice

Ronald C. Machen Jr.
*United States Attorney for the
District of Columbia*
Judiciary Center
555 Fourth St. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, April 29, 2014

For Information Contact:

Public Affairs

(202) 252-6933

<http://www.justice.gov/usao/dc/index.html>

Former Social Security Administration Employee Pleads Guilty To Taking Bribes in Return for Giving People Increased Benefits -Admits Accepting Total of \$54,662 From 13 People-

WASHINGTON – Christopher Payton, a former specialist for the Social Security Administration in Washington, D.C., pled guilty today to soliciting more than \$50,000 in bribes from Social Security recipients in return for providing them with extra, unauthorized benefits.

The guilty plea was announced by U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. and Michael McGill, Special Agent in Charge of the Philadelphia Field Division of the Social Security Administration's Office of the Inspector General.

Payton, 46, of Mount Rainier, Md., pled guilty in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia to one count of bribery. The Honorable Senior Judge Gladys Kessler scheduled sentencing for July 16, 2014. The charge carries a statutory maximum of 15 years in prison and financial penalties. Under federal sentencing guidelines, Payton faces a likely range of 30 to 37 months in prison and a fine of up to \$60,000. The plea agreement calls for him to pay \$54,662 in restitution and an identical amount in a forfeiture money judgment.

According to a statement of offense, signed by the defendant and the government, Payton was a Social Insurance Specialist for the Social Security Administration's Anacostia Office in Southeast Washington. His duties included conducting interviews regarding eligibility for benefits, authorizing or disallowing entitlement, and reviewing and authorizing Supplemental Security Income. He had computerized access to the agency's database.

Between January and May of 2013, Payton met with 13 people as part of his responsibilities at the agency. Upon meeting these individuals, Payton told them, in substance, that if they gave him a tip, he would take care of them. After they agreed to his solicitation, Payton caused retroactive Supplemental Security Income benefits to go into the individuals'

bank accounts. These retroactive payments were not properly authorized, and Payton knew that the people receiving them were not entitled to the extra income.

After the individuals began seeing increased retroactive benefits in their bank accounts, they met with Payton throughout the Anacostia neighborhood and gave him payments. All told, Payton received \$54,662 in cash payments from the individuals for his actions.

Payton's activities came to light after someone reported his suspicious conduct. In addition, authorities received information through a fraud hotline operated by the Social Security Administration's Office of the Inspector General. The public can report allegations of waste, fraud, and abuse online at <http://oig.ssa.gov/report> or by phone at 1-800-269-0271.

In announcing the plea, U.S. Attorney Machen and Special Agent in Charge McGill praised the work of those who investigated the case from the Social Security Administration's Office of the Inspector General. They also acknowledged the efforts of those who handled the case from the U.S. Attorney's Office, including Paralegal Specialists Donna Galindo, Krishawn Graham, and Angela Lawrence; Investigative Analyst Sharon Johnson, and former Paralegal Specialist Shanna Hays. They expressed appreciation for the assistance provided by Trial Attorney Edward P. Sullivan of the Department of Justice's Public Integrity Section.

Finally, they commended the work of Assistant U.S. Attorney Philip A. Selden, who is prosecuting the case, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Diane Lucas, who is assisting with forfeiture issues.

14-101

##