



Department of Justice

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Eastern District of Louisiana

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FORMER HBPA PRESIDENT PLEADS GUILTY TO CONSPIRACY TO COMMIT MAIL FRAUD, WIRE FRAUD, IDENTITY FRAUD, AND HEALTH CARE FRAUD

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA - **SEAN DANIEL ALFORTISH**, age 43, a resident of Kenner, Louisiana, pleaded guilty today before United States District Judge Eldon E. Fallon to conspiracy to commit mail fraud, wire fraud, identity fraud, and health care fraud, announced U. S. Attorney Jim Letten. **ALFORTISH**, who served as president of the Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association (HBPA) from 2005 until 2010, previously was charged along with co-defendant **MONA ROMERO** in a 29-count indictment.

According to court documents, in 2005 **ALFORTISH** was elected to his first term of office as president of the HBPA, which is designated as the official representative of horsemen in the State. In today's guilty plea, **ALFORTISH** admitted that he and others conspired to rig the outcome of the 2008 HBPA election in which he was running for a second term of office. An object of the conspiracy was to re-elect **ALFORTISH** as president and to elect new board members selected by **ALFORTISH** to replace certain members of the board of directors of the HBPA who had questioned his management of the HBPA during his first term of office.

In order to be counted as valid, ballots had to bear a U.S. Postal Service postmark and the envelope had to bear the Social Security number of an HBPA member eligible to vote in the election. **ALFORTISH** admitted that while preparing and casting the fraudulent ballots, the co-conspirators used the Social Security numbers of HBPA members without their knowledge and consent. Three individuals flew to various cities in four states, Ohio, Kentucky, Florida and Texas, to mail falsified election ballots with **ALFORTISH's** knowledge and direction.

Another object of the conspiracy was to commit health care fraud, in connection with the Horsemen's Medical Benefit Trust which received statutorily dedicated funds out of horse racing proceeds to operate a medical benefit plan for Louisiana horsemen. **ALFORTISH** admitted that he systematically diverted these funds under the guise of administrative expenses of the trust.

On his plea of guilty, **ALFORTISH** faces a maximum penalty of five (5) years imprisonment, and/or a \$250,000 in fines, and a \$100 special assessment.

Sentencing has been scheduled for December 15, 2011.

Previously, Mona Romero, former executive director, and Cindy Romero, former state farm and field director of the HBPA, each pleaded guilty to conspiracy in connection with the case.

The case was investigated by Postal Inspectors, Investigators, and Fraud Analysts from the United States Postal Inspection Service and the United States Department of Labor, Employee Benefits Security Administration, Dallas Regional Office. Roger Hilburn, director of the Dallas Regional Office of the Labor Department's Employee Benefits Security Administration said, "I hope that this case sends a clear message to all who hold an office of trust, or operate or administer employee benefit plans, that the Department of Labor is committed to vigorously pursuing those who abuse their positions and commit crimes against employees of private-sector health plans." Houston Division Inspector-in-Charge Gary R. Barksdale of the United States Postal Inspection Service, said, "The integrity of the mail is worth protecting and the Postal Inspection Service is committed to enforcing the laws intended to keep mail safe, secure and trustworthy. This investigation is but one example of our vigorous enforcement efforts."

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U. S. Attorneys Eileen Gleason, G. Dall Kammer, and Patrice Harris Sullivan.