



# Department of Justice

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District of Massachusetts

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## FORMER MASSACHUSETTS STATE SENATOR DIANNE WILKERSON PLEADS GUILTY TO EXTORTION

BOSTON, Mass. - Former Massachusetts State Senator **DIANNE WILKERSON** pled guilty today to public corruption charges stemming from her acceptance of more than \$20,000 in cash payments in connection with her official duties.

United States Attorney Carmen M. Ortiz, Warren T. Bamford, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation - Boston Field Office and Boston Police Commissioner Edward Davis announced today that **DIANNE WILKERSON**, 55, of Boston, pled guilty before U.S. District Judge Douglas P. Woodlock to eight counts of attempted extortion under color of official right.

“Citizens place extraordinary trust in their elected officials, and it is those citizens who have been harmed by Ms. Wilkerson’s criminal conduct the most,” said U.S. Attorney Ortiz. “Today’s conviction should send a message that justice, and jail time, will be sought for those who violate that trust. We will continue to aggressively pursue elected officials who abuse their official position for personal gain,” concluded Ortiz.

The counts to which **WILKERSON** pled guilty to today represent the Government’s core charges against **WILKERSON**, stemming from her acceptance of eight cash payments over a period of 16 months, totaling \$23,500 from undercover agents and a cooperating witness.

As part of the plea agreement in this case, the Government will dismiss the remaining counts pending against **WILKERSON**. The dismissal of these charges has no impact on the United States Sentencing Guidelines calculation. Moreover, the Government has reserved the right to seek a sentence of four years incarceration, a sentence in excess of the United States Sentencing Guidelines calculation.

At today’s plea hearing, the prosecutor outlined the Government’s case against **WILKERSON**, including highlights from extensive video and audio recordings of **WILKERSON’S** acceptance of cash. The prosecutor told the Court that between June 2007 and March 2008, **WILKERSON** took \$8,500 in cash payments from an undercover agent, and a cooperating witness to assist in obtaining a liquor license for a proposed nightclub in Roxbury. In connection with these payments, **WILKERSON** pressured the Boston Licensing Board, the Mayor and the City Council, and also held-up pending legislation in the State Senate,

including legislation increasing the salaries of the members of Boston Licensing Board. As part of her efforts to obtain a liquor license for the proposed club, **WILKERSON** ultimately introduced legislation to increase the number of liquor licenses available in Boston, and then manipulated the timing of that legislation at the request of undercover agents.

The prosecutor also told the Court that in January 2008, **WILKERSON** proposed that an undercover agent, posing as out-of-state businessman, become involved in the development of a piece of state property in Roxbury. **WILKERSON** proposed that she introduce legislation which directly designated the property to a private entity for development in order to avoid the lengthy public bidding process. In connection with her assistance in the direct designation of the property, **WILKERSON** took a \$5,000 payment in June 2008. Shortly after her loss in the Democratic primary for the state senate in September 2008, **WILKERSON** requested a payment of \$10,000 from the undercover agent posing as the out-of-state businessman. In early October 2008, the undercover agent paid **WILKERSON** the requested \$10,000 in cash, explicitly stating that he was paying **WILKERSON** to file the direct designation legislation in the state senate and to continue to advance the private interests of his business.

**WILKERSON** faces up to 20 years of imprisonment on each of the eight counts, to be followed by three years of supervised release and \$250,000 fine. Judge Woodlock scheduled sentencing for September 20, 2010.

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, in conjunction with the Boston Police Department Anti-Corruption Unit and the Internal Revenue Service. It is being prosecuted by Deputy Criminal Chief John T. McNeil and Assistant U.S. Attorney James P. Dowden.

**WILKERSON's** co-defendant, Charles "Chuck" Turner is scheduled for trial on October 12, 2010 before Judge Douglas P. Woodlock.

The details contained in the Second Superseding Indictment against Turner are allegations. Turner is presumed to be innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

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