

# CONTINUING CORRUPTION IN ILLINOIS



Anti-Corruption Report Number 10

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Chicago continues to be the most corrupt city in the country and Illinois continues to be the third most corrupt state.<sup>1</sup>

During 2016, the latest year for which U.S. Department of Justice figures are available, public corruption convictions in the State of Illinois rose to 35 from 19 in 2015. However this is a significant decline from 69 such convictions in 2013 and an average of 44.8 convictions per year during the past decade. Nonetheless, public corruption remains unacceptably high in our state. Over the last several years, incremental reforms to address corruption have been initiated but they have been insufficient. For example, the Chicago Inspector General is now allowed to investigate aldermen and their staff, measures to introduce greater accountability with the Chicago Police Department have been begun with the creation of the Chicago Office of Police Accountability, and civics classes are now required to be part of the Illinois public school curriculum. While these measures help, they fail to eliminate the most pernicious forms of corruption at the agency, municipal, county, and state levels of government. In addition, we still have serious abuses in the funding of elections corrupting all levels of government.

In 2016, we not only continued to see the typical patterns of corruption in Illinois, but we also saw developments in two of the most notorious corruption cases in recent years. The first involved former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Dennis Hastert. On April 27, 2016, Hastert was sentenced to 15 months in prison for lying to the FBI and making illegal bank withdrawals to pay hush money to a Yorkville High School student he allegedly sexually molested when Hastert was a teacher and coach. He was indicted by federal prosecutors in May 2015 and convicted later that year. Despite admitting to sexual molestation, Hastert was not convicted of that crime due to statute of limitations but was convicted and sentenced for the lesser crime. In July 2017, Hastert was transferred to a halfway house outside of Chicago and served the

remainder of his sentence there. One of Hastert's victims, Scott Cross, told CNN that Hastert's sentencing and transfer was only "a slap on the wrist."<sup>2</sup>

The second case involves Former U.S. House of Representatives Aaron Schock. In 2016, Schock faced a 24-count indictment for misusing campaign and government funds. Schock's behavior came to the attention of U.S. Attorney's office after news stories were published on Schock's lavish spending for travel, entertainment, and remodeling—which included nearly \$400,000 of taxpayer funds to transform his office to look like a "Downton Abbey" set. Schock's attorneys claim that he is innocent, that the indictment was part of a politically motivated witch hunt, and that all financial irregularities can be explained as accounting errors. Since the initial indictment, U.S. District Court Judge Colin Bruce dropped two of the charges. The trial was set to begin in January 2018, but has been delayed. In April 2018, his attorneys asked a Federal Appeals Court to drop the charges arguing that they were based upon ambiguous U. S. House of Representatives rules while the Justice Department maintained that they were prosecuting his illegal misuse of government and campaign funds. The Appeals Court has yet to issue an opinion but is expected to side with the Justice Department. Then Schock's trial will go forward.<sup>3</sup> In the meantime, Schock has resigned from his position as congressman.

In this report similar corruption cases are compiled from several sources, including the U.S. Attorney's Offices in Illinois's three federal judicial districts: the Northern District — which includes Chicago — Central District, and Southern District. Also included are reports gleaned, from various Illinois State's Attorneys and major news stories published in *The Chicago Sun-Times*, *The Chicago Tribune*, and other Illinois newspapers.

## **Chicago**

An analysis of Department of Justice statistics from its Public Integrity Section shows that Chicago remains the most corrupt city in the United States. From 1976 to 2016, a total of 1,706 individuals have been convicted of public corruption in the Federal Judicial District, which includes Chicago and the Northern third of Illinois. The entire state has had over 2,000 corruption convictions during the same time period. Few city agencies or state government offices have been free of scandal and public corruption in Chicago has been endemic to the city's and the state's political culture for more than 150 years.

**Table 1****Federal Public Corruption Convictions by the top fifteen Judicial District 1976-2016**

| Rank for Conviction | District (Major City)                   | 1976-89 | 1990-99 | 2000-09 | 2010-16 | Total 1976-2016 |
|---------------------|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------------|
| 1                   | Illinois-Northern (Chicago)             | 508     | 610     | 367     | 221     | 1,706           |
| 2                   | California-Central (Los Angeles)        | 268     | 595     | 383     | 265     | 1,511           |
| 3                   | New York-Southern (Manhattan)           | 550     | 398     | 242     | 122     | 1,312           |
| 4                   | District of Columbia                    | 239     | 393     | 342     | 175     | 1,149           |
| 5                   | Florida-Southern (Miami)                | 108     | 437     | 404     | 190     | 1,139           |
| 6                   | New Jersey (Newark)                     | 202     | 264     | 410     | 216     | 1,092           |
| 7                   | Ohio-Northern (Cleveland)               | 173     | 314     | 333     | 159     | 979             |
| 8                   | Pennsylvania-Eastern (Philadelphia)     | 291     | 246     | 252     | 194     | 983             |
| 9                   | Virginia-Eastern (Richmond)             | 189     | 213     | 303     | 264     | 969             |
| 10                  | New York-Eastern (Brooklyn)             | 308     | 237     | 204     | 85      | 834             |
| 11                  | Texas-Southern (Houston)                | 116     | 205     | 267     | 212     | 800             |
| 12                  | Florida-Middle (Orlando)                | 159     | 179     | 230     | 147     | 715             |
| 13                  | Massachusetts (Boston)                  | 193     | 159     | 187     | 132     | 671             |
| 14                  | Louisiana-Eastern (New Orleans)         | 117     | 173     | 230     | 142     | 662             |
| 15                  | California-Eastern (Sacramento, Fresno) | 156     | 203     | 200     | 78      | 637             |

As Table 1 illustrates, in every decade Chicago has been one of the most corrupt metropolitan regions in the country. Although New York and Los Angeles are larger cities in population, their judicial districts historically have had fewer public corruption convictions per capita. .

One of the costliest recent corruption cases in Chicago involved the former Assistant Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Transportation, John Bills. In January 2016, Bills was convicted of 20 counts of fraud, extortion, bribery, and other crimes. In August of that year, he was sentenced to 10 years in prison. Bills used his position with the Department of Transportation to secure a \$131 million contract for Redflex Traffic Systems Inc. Between 2002-2011, Redflex installed red-light traffic cameras throughout Chicago. To reward Bills for securing the contract, the company gave him \$560,000 in cash, paid \$18,000 in entertainment expenses, and allowed him to use a \$177,000 condo in Arizona. In addition to Bills, the federal government prosecuted three co-conspirators: former Redflex CEO, Karen Finley, former Redflex Vice-President, Aaron Rosenberg, and Bills' friend, Martin O'Malley. Redflex agreed to pay \$20 million in restitution to the city of Chicago and Mayor Rahm Emanuel subsequently cancelled Redflex's contract in 2013.

**Table 2**

**Federal Public Corruption Convictions Per Capita for Top Thirteen States with Most Convictions 1976-2016**

| <b>Rank for Convictions Per Capita</b> | <b>State</b>         | <b>Convictions 1976-2016</b> | <b>Population 2010</b> | <b>Conviction Per 10,000 Population</b> |
|--|----------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|---|
| 1                                      | District of Columbia | 1,149                        | 601,723                | 19.10                                   |
| 2                                      | Louisiana            | 1,170                        | 4,533,372              | 2.58                                    |
| <b>3</b>                               | <b>Illinois</b>      | <b>2,068</b>                 | <b>12,830,632</b>      | <b>1.61</b>                             |
| 4                                      | Tennessee            | 998                          | 6,364,105              | 1.57                                    |
| 5                                      | New York             | 2,814                        | 19,378,102             | 1.45                                    |
| 6                                      | Pennsylvania         | 1,760                        | 12,702,739             | 1.39                                    |
| 7                                      | Ohio                 | 1,537                        | 11,536,504             | 1.33                                    |
| 8                                      | Virginia             | 1,123                        | 8,001,024              | 1.40                                    |
| 9                                      | New Jersey           | 1,092                        | 8,791,894              | 1.24                                    |
| 10                                     | Florida              | 2,107                        | 18,801,310             | 1.12                                    |
| 11                                     | Georgia              | 1,080                        | 9,687,653              | 1.11                                    |
| 12                                     | Texas                | 2,182                        | 25,245,561             | .86                                     |
| 13                                     | California           | 2,804                        | 37,253,956             | .67                                     |

On a per capita basis, Illinois remains the third most corrupt state compared to all 50 states and the District of Columbia. While New York, California, Texas, and Florida each have more total public corruption convictions than Illinois, their populations are much larger than Illinois'. Therefore, they rank lower than Illinois on a per capita basis.

Washington D. C. has the most public corruption convictions per capita, primarily because the population in the District is comparably so low, but also because it is the center of the national government where the Department of Justice is headquartered.

Louisiana, which also has much lower population than Illinois, ranks second on a per capita basis. It is another state, like Illinois, with a long history of control by a corrupt political machine. Louisiana has been dominated by a corrupt Democratic Party Machine going back to before the days of Huey Long.

In Illinois and in Chicago corruption thrived under both Democratic and Republican political machines. They took turns. Corruption is nonpartisan here.

The red lights cameras were not the only corrupt government contract in Illinois, unfortunately. In March 2016, Chicago businessman, George E. Smith, admitted in U.S. District Court to defrauding the state of Illinois when he managed to convince two state agencies to grant him separate six-figure government contracts for the same service. His not-for-profit agency, Diversified Behavioral Comprehensive Care, provided drug and alcohol treatment services to residents in Illinois. Smith received two grants from the state — one, totaling \$400,000 and the other totaling \$550,000 — for the same program. He charged the state twice for the same services. As a result, Smith will serve two years in prison and pay \$480,000 to the state in restitution.

In one of the more prominent corruption cases of recent years, Barbara Byrd Bennett — Chief Executive Officer of Chicago Public Schools — pled guilty to one count of wire fraud. Bennett was to have received \$2 million in bribes and kickbacks to grant lucrative no-bid contracts that totaled more than \$23 million. The contracts were with education consulting firms, SUPES Academy and Synesi Associates. In October 2016, Gary Solomon and Thomas Vranas, owners of the two companies, also pleaded guilty to wire fraud and bribery for their involvement in the scheme. Solomon was sentenced to seven years in prison while Vranas was sentenced to 18 months.

In December 2016, Chicago Alderman for the 20<sup>th</sup> Ward, Willie Cochran was indicated on 15 counts of wire fraud, bribery, and extortion. The *Chicago Sun Times* reported that Cochran — over a three-year period — illegally paid himself more than \$115,000 from his campaign funds.<sup>4</sup> The allegations triggered a federal investigation in which the U.S. Attorney's office

found evidence of Cochran soliciting bribes of \$1,500 from an Illinois attorney who represented developers in Cochran's ward. Cochran's case has yet to go to trial, but he has announced that he would not be seeking re-election in 2019.<sup>5</sup> If he is convicted, Cochran will be the 36<sup>th</sup> aldermen to be convicted of corruption since 1972 which is astounding because there are only 50 Chicago Aldermen and only about 200 have served in the council since that date.

### **Illinois Counties**

The most highly publicized cases of corruption in county governments have been in the office of Cook County Clerk Dorothy Brown who recently announced that she is a candidate again for Mayor of Chicago.<sup>6</sup> Her office is still under investigation by the U.S. Attorney and her announcement will spark further media scrutiny.

In April 2016, Sivasubramani Rajaram, an employee in Dorothy Brown's office, pled guilty to one count of perjury in U.S. District Court after admitting he lied to a federal grand jury. In 2014, Rajaram lied while testifying to the grand jury about a \$15,000 loan he made, shortly before being hired, to Goat Masters Corporations, a company owned by Brown's husband, Benton Cook III. Brown has continued to claim that she was not aware of the loan and had no direct role in hiring Rajaram. Rajaram's defense attorneys claimed that he lied to the grand jury because he feared retaliation from certain public officials that he failed to specify.

Then, in May 2017, Beena Patel a one-time top administrator with Brown's office was indicted for perjury for lying under oath to a federal grand jury about selling tickets to other employees in the office for the Cook County Circuit Court Clerk's campaign fundraisers. When questioned about the incident. Patel claimed she never sold tickets to employees of the Clerk's office and that she did not know of other employees who had either. Both of these statements were proven false. The indictment also claims that Patel pressured Brown's Chief of Staff to

promote an employee whose brother had made donations to Brown's campaign. Patel has since been convicted of making false declarations to the grand jury.

While neither Brown nor husband has yet been charged with any crime, in February 2018, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that employees in Brown's office told federal investigators that the "going rate" to buy a job in Brown's office was \$10,000.<sup>7</sup>

There have been other cases of corruption in counties and suburbs as well. In January 2016, a Cook County Recorder of Deeds employee, Regina Taylor, pled guilty to one count of mail fraud in U.S. District Court. Taylor accepted a \$200 bribe from a person who requested adding a relative's name to the deed for a home in Oak Park. Taylor told the person — who was an undercover agent — not to tell anyone that the other three people on the deed were deceased and then prepared the fraudulent documents.

Outside of Cook County, in May 2016, Winnebago County Purchasing Director, Sally Claassen, was sentenced to two-years in prison and ordered to pay more than \$440,000 in restitution for embezzling \$451,353 over a two-year period. Claassen, who had power over the county-issued credit cards, used funds public funds to purchase personal items to remodel sections of her home, and visit vacation resorts.

Investigations are continuing into a series of corruption cases in suburbs such as Harvey and Markam up to the present day. And in Sauk Village, Village Treasurer James Griegel, was charged with stealing more than \$21,000 from the Sauk Village's police pension fund.

In Chicago in 2016, there were also convictions of city government employees like building inspector Robert Uribe for taking bribes from businessmen and homeowners.

## **Law Enforcement and Correction Officers**

Since the shooting of Laquan McDonald by Chicago Police Officer Jason Van Dyke near the end of 2014, there has been a surge in public pressure to bring real reform to the Chicago Police Department. On October 5, 2016, the Chicago City Council established the Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA) to replace the highly criticized Independent Police Review Authority (IPRA). A year later, on September 15, 2017, the office officially began operating. COPA was given the power to conduct investigations of possible police misconduct, excessive force, and improper uses of police power. While it is too early to determine if COPA will have an effect on curbing police misconduct, the office has been criticized for its lengthy review process. As University of Chicago law professor Craig Futterman expressed his frustrations to the *Chicago Tribune*: "The longer the delays, that diminishes trust and it diminishes transparency by not providing a prompt window into how the agency charged with investigating police misconduct is conducting its investigations."<sup>8</sup>

While IPRA was being phased-out and prior to COPA getting underway, police corruption cases in Chicago continued in the year 2016. For instance, in December of 2016, Ray M. Ramirez pled guilty in U.S. District Court to a misdemeanor and was sentenced to six months in prison for selling citizens private information. Using police computers, Ramirez extracted individuals' information and sold it to a local liquor store clerk. Ramirez was also accused of shakedowns of store employees for cash.

Outside of Chicago, Cook County struggles with corruption and misconduct in its law enforcement agencies. In April 2016, former Cook County Sheriff's Police Officer, Robert Vaughan, was sentenced to seven and a half years in prison for attempting to rob a federal agent.

For four years, Vaughan and his partner Stanley M. Kogut stole illegal substances and contraband from suspects, only to resell them on the street. In the course of these operations, the two managed to make approximately \$300,000. Kogut's case never went to trial because he committed suicide shortly after being arrested.

In April 2016, video footage was made public of an inmate at Cook County Jail being brutally beaten by a corrections officer. The officer, Branden Norise, was found not guilty of wrongdoing even though video footage clearly showed the inmate on the ground receiving several blows to the head.<sup>9</sup>

In December 2017, Robert Dartt, a Cook County Sheriff's lieutenant and 17-year veteran officer, was sentenced to four months in a federal prison for violating an inmate's civil rights when he used excessive force in 2011. Even though the crime was committed in 2011, chargers were not brought against Dart until after he had resigned as a corrections officer in 2016.<sup>10</sup>

## **Conclusion**

On February 17, 2016, Gallop released a poll on Americans' confidence in their state governments. Illinois ranked last with only 25% of the population reporting that they felt confident in the state's government.<sup>11</sup> The ranking was the worst of all states by a significant margin. The next lowest was Rhode Island with 33%; the state with the most confidence was North Dakota with 81%. Even more disappointing was that this was the second time Gallop had taken this poll with the same results. Previously in 2013, Illinois also ranked the least trusted government with only 28% of residents reporting that they trusted the state government.<sup>12</sup> This means that over three years Illinoisans have become more cynical and jaded about their elected officials. Gallop research also shows that 50% of all Illinoisans would leave the state if given the opportunity, more so than any other state in the nation.<sup>13</sup>

This loss of faith in Illinois's institutions is the result of budget stalemates, low-bond ratings, a sluggish economy, and perpetual cases of corruption that pervade every level of government. Illinois and Chicago have implemented some reforms to curb corruption. For instance, currently there are a series of bills in the Illinois House and Senate to strengthen and clarify the role of the Office of Illinois' Executive Inspector General. We have begun to require that civic education and civic engagement begin to be taught in high school. In future years, we may have a more informed electorate willing to take stronger actions such as campaign finance reform. The state has electronic voter registration by which citizens can register to vote online and is moving to Automatic Voter Registration when citizens obtain driver licenses or other state licenses in order to increase citizen participation in elections. And some police reforms have been adopted in Chicago.

However, these efforts do not go far enough in changing a political culture that promotes private gain over the public good. Additional reforms that are needed include:

- 1) Public funding of political campaigns
- 2) A fair remapping of all legislative districts
- 3) Increased citizen participation in elections and government
- 4) Strengthening inspector generals and creating a Suburban Inspector General
- 5) Fundamental changes in police departments and correction facilities across the State
- 6) Preventing public officials from representing individuals and corporations for profit before other units of governments
- 7) Making public information easily available in more useable forms on the Internet

## Appendix 1

### Corruption by Date

#### January 20, 2016

Convicted

A clerk in the Cook County Recorder of Deeds office, Regina Taylor, pleaded guilty in federal court to one count of honest services mail fraud. Taylor accepted a \$200 bribe from an undercover agent to back date and add a relative's name to a deed for home in Oak Park.

*Sources: Department of Justice Press Release, Jan. 20, 2016;*

<https://www.justice.gov/usao-ndil/pr/former-clerk-cook-county-recorder-deeds-admits-accepting-cash-bribe-exchange-preparing>

*Chicago Sun-Times, August 2, 2016*

<https://chicago.suntimes.com/news/former-cook-county-recorders-clerk-pleads-guilty-to-accepting-200-bribe/>

#### January 26, 2016

Convicted/Sentenced

John Bills, an assistant Chicago Transportation Department commissioner, was convicted in federal court of extortion, bribery conspiracy and bribery, mail and wire fraud, and filing false tax returns for his role in a scheme involving multi-million dollar red-light camera contracts. In August 2016, Bills was sentenced to ten years in federal prison.

*Sources: Department of Justice Press Release, Jan. 26, 2016, and August 29, 2016*

*Chicago Tribune, January 27, 2016, and August 30, 2016* <https://search-proquest-com.gatekeeper.chipublib.org/chicagotribune/docview/1760264542/A88A9FD070954A66PQ/1?accountid=303>  
<https://search-proquest-com.gatekeeper.chipublib.org/chicagotribune/docview/1814867071/A88A9FD070954A66PQ/2?accountid=303>

#### March 29, 2016

Convicted/Sentenced

Chicago Businessman, George E Smith, pleaded guilty to fraud in US District Court. Smith convinced two state agencies into granting him two separate six-figure government grants for the same service. Smith was sentenced to serve two years in prison to pay restitution of \$480,000.

*Sources: Department of Justice Press Release, March 29, 2016*

<https://www.justice.gov/usao-cdil/pr/chicago-businessman-pleads-guilty-grant-fraud-scheme>

<https://www.justice.gov/usao-cdil/pr/chicago-businessman-sentenced-two-years-prison-grant-fraud-scheme>

*Chicago Sun-Times, March 30, 2016, and September 23, 2016*

<https://chicago.suntimes.com/chicago-politics/businessman-guilty-plea-state-grant-fraud/>

<https://chicago.suntimes.com/news/chicago-businessman-gets-two-year-prison-sentence-in-fraud-scheme/>

#### April 5, 2016

Convicted/Sentenced

A Chicago building inspector, Robert Uribe, pleaded guilty in US District Court to one count of attempted extortion after being charged with soliciting and receiving a \$300 bribe in exchange

for allowing renovation work without a permit. Uribe was sentenced to probation because the judge decided that Uribe had no prior convictions and was a person who did this once.

*Source: Department of Justice Press Release, April 5, 2016*

<https://www.justice.gov/usao-ndil/pr/city-chicago-building-inspector-charged-demanding-bribe-property-owner-exchange>

*Chicago Sun-Times, April 5, 2016 and Chicago Tribune October 21, 2016*

<https://chicago.suntimes.com/news/chicago-building-inspector-bribe-extortion/>

<https://search-proquest-com.gatekeeper.chipublib.org/docview/1830620785?accountid=303>

## **April 13, 2016**

Sentenced

Former Cook County Sheriff Officer, Robert Vaughan, was sentenced to 7 ½ years in prison for attempting to rob a federal agent who was disguised as a drug dealer. Vaughan pleaded guilty in 2015 to one count of robbery. Vaughan and his partner, Stanley M. Kogut, stole illegal substances and contraband from suspects and resold them on to the street, earning approximately \$300,000 in the process. Shortly after being arrested, Kogut committed suicide.

*Source: Department of Justice Press Release, April 13, 2016*

[www.justice.gov/usao-ndil/pr/former-cook-county-sheriff-s-police-officer-sentenced-7-12-years-prison-robbing-drug](http://www.justice.gov/usao-ndil/pr/former-cook-county-sheriff-s-police-officer-sentenced-7-12-years-prison-robbing-drug)

*Chicago Sun-Times, June 24, 2016 and Chicago Tribune, April 13, 2016*

<https://chicago.suntimes.com/news/after-partners-suicide-alleged-dirty-sheriffs-cop-released-on-bond/>

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/breaking/ct-cook-sheriff-cop-sentencing-met-20160413-story.html>

## **April 20, 2016**

Convicted

Sivasubramani Rajaram, an employee in the office of Cook County Circuit Court Clerk Dorothy Brown, pleaded guilty in US District Court to lying about hiring practices in Brown's office. Rajaram lied to the grand jury about loaning \$15,000 to Goat Masters Corporation, a company whose president was Brown's husband, Benton Cook III.

*Source: Department of Justice Press Release, April 20, 2016*

<https://www.justice.gov/usao-ndil/pr/glenview-man-pleads-guilty-perjury-charge-lying-federal-grand-jury-investigating>

*Chicago Sun-Times, April 20, 2016* <https://chicago.suntimes.com/chicago-politics/former-clerks-office-employee-expected-to-plead-guilty/>

## **April 25, 2016**

Convicted/Sentenced

Sauk Village treasurer, James Griegel, was charged with stealing more than \$21,000 from the Sauk Village's police pension fund. Federal prosecutors said Griegel fraudulently issued pension funds to himself by forging the names of Sauk Village officials. He was convicted in 2016 and in April 2017, Griegel was sentenced to 30-days in prison.

*Source: Department of Justice Press Release, April 25, 2016*

<https://www.justice.gov/usao-ndil/pr/sauk-village-treasurer-charged-stealing-more-21000-police-pension-fund>

*Chicago Sun-Times April 25, 2016, and Daily Southtown April 7, 2017*

<https://chicago.suntimes.com/news/sauk-village-treasurer-charged-with-stealing-more-than-21k/>

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/daily-southtown/news/ct-sta-sauk-village-treasurer-st-0407-20170406-story.html>

**April 26, 2016**

Sentenced

Ex-U.S. Speaker of the House, Dennis Hastert, who is also a former Illinois State Representative, was sentenced to 15 months in prison. He pleaded guilty in October, 2015, to one count of illegally structuring \$950,000 in bank withdrawals to avoid reporting requirements. Hastert also altered records in an effort to cover-up payments to young men who he had sexually molested while coaching a high school wrestling team decades earlier.

*Sources: Chicago Tribune, April 27, 2016, and New York Times April 27, 2016*

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/breaking/ct-dennis-hastert-sentencing-20160427-story.html>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/28/us/dennis-hastert-sentencing.html>

**June 1, 2016**

Convicted/Sentenced

Winnebago County purchasing director, Sally Claassen, pleaded guilty in federal court to two counts of theft from county programs that received federal funds. She used credit cards and false invoices to embezzle more than \$451,000 over a two-year period. She was sentenced to two-years in prison and ordered to pay more than \$440,000 in restitution.

*Source: Department of Justice Press Releases, June 1, 2016, and May 26, 2016*

<https://www.justice.gov/usao-ndil/pr/former-winnabago-county-purchasing-director-sally-claassen-charged-theft-winnabago>

[/www.justice.gov/usao-ndil/pr/former-winnabago-county-purchasing-director-sally-claassen-pleads-guilty-federal-charges](http://www.justice.gov/usao-ndil/pr/former-winnabago-county-purchasing-director-sally-claassen-pleads-guilty-federal-charges)

*Rockford Register Star, May 26, 2016*

<http://www.rstar.com/news/20160526/feds-charge-former-winnabago-county-purchasing-director-sally-claassen-with>

**July 22, 2016**

Indicted

Philip Esformes, Odette Barcha and Arnaldo Carmouze, managers and owners of 30 nursing homes and assisted-living facilities in the Chicago area, were indicted for orchestrating an elaborate Medicaid and Medicare bribery and kickback scheme totalling \$1 billion.

*Source: Chicago Sun-Times [23 July 2016], Chicago Tribune [4 Oct 2016],*

<https://chicago.suntimes.com/news/chicago-area-man-1-of-3-charged-in-biggest-ever-medicare-fraud/>

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/watchdog/ct-philip-esformes-jailed-met-20161002-story.html>

**September 28, 2016**

Convicted/Sentenced

Debra Moore, a caseworker in the n Illinois Department of Human Services employee, pleaded guilty for misappropriating more than \$300,000 in benefits that were meant for needy families, according to a release from the Office of the Illinois Attorney General.

*Sources: Chicago Sun-Times, September 28, 2016*

<https://search-proquest-com.gatekeeper.chipublib.org/results/C1ED44DFF9D34734PQ/1?accountid=303>

*Office of Executive Inspector General Newsletter*  
[https://www.illinois.gov/oeig/publications/Documents/Newsletter\\_October\\_13\\_2016.pdf](https://www.illinois.gov/oeig/publications/Documents/Newsletter_October_13_2016.pdf)

**October 13, 2016**

Convicted

Marcellus Bailey, an employee with Illinois Department of Human Services, pled guilty to conspiracy to commit bribery for taking bribes in exchange for confidential information maintained by the State of Illinois. The case was prosecuted by the Office of Attorney General.

*Source: Office of Executive Inspector General Newsletter*  
[https://www.illinois.gov/oeig/publications/Documents/Newsletter\\_October\\_13\\_2016.pdf](https://www.illinois.gov/oeig/publications/Documents/Newsletter_October_13_2016.pdf)

**October 18, 2016**

Convicted/Sentenced

Gary Solomon, pleaded guilty to one count of honest services wire fraud in federal court for his part in the plot that steered \$23 million in no-bid deals from the broke Chicago Public Schools. Under the plea agreement he must pay \$254,000 in restitution and he will face a maximum of 20 years in prison when sentenced on March 24, 2017.

*Source: Department of Justice Press Releases, October 18, 2016*  
<http://infoweb.newsbank.com.gatekeeper.chipublib.org/resources/doc/nb/news/1601CA0C953D39B0?p=NewsBank>  
*Sources: Chicago Sun-Times, October 18, 2016*  
<http://infoweb.newsbank.com.gatekeeper.chipublib.org/resources/doc/nb/news/1601CA0C953D39B0?p=NewsBank>

**November 10, 2016**

Indicted

U.S. Rep. Aaron Schock, was indicted for fraud, theft of government funds, false statements and filing false tax returns by the U.S. Attorney for the Central District of Illinois. The 24-count indictment, handed down in Springfield, Ill., was for misusing campaign and congressional office funds. Schock's behavior came to the attention of federal prosecutors after news stories were published on Schock's lavish spending for travel, entertainment, and office remodeling.

*Sources: Department of Justice Press Release, Nov. 10, 2016,*  
<https://www.justice.gov/usao-cdil/pr/former-us-representative-aaron-schock-indicted-fraud-theft-government-funds-false>  
*Chicago Tribune, Nov. 10, 2016*  
<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/breaking/ct-aaron-schock-indicted-20161110-story.html>  
*The Alton Telegraph, Nov. 10, 2016*  
<https://www.thetelegraph.com/news/article/Grand-jury-indicts-Aaron-Schock-on-wire-fraud-12585973.php>

**November 15, 2016**

License Revoked

An investigation by the Office of Executive Inspector General found that Irina Kushnerova, a licensed director of a funeral home, created false invoices in order to obtain State reimbursements for funeral expenses. Kushnerova has had her funeral license revoked and the Department of Human Services sought to recoup the funds.

*Source: Office of Executive Inspector General Newsletter*  
[https://www.illinois.gov/oeig/publications/Documents/Newsletter\\_November\\_15\\_2016.pdf](https://www.illinois.gov/oeig/publications/Documents/Newsletter_November_15_2016.pdf)

**December 8, 2016**

Convicted/Sentenced

Chicago police officer, Ray M. Ramirez, pled guilty to one misdemeanor charge and was sentenced to six months in prison for selling law enforcement information. Ramirez sold information on background checks, vehicle registrations, and police incidents to a liquor store clerk. Ramirez also shook down the clerk and other store employees for cash payments.

*Sources: Department of Justice Press Release, and Chicago Sun Times, December 9, 2016*  
<https://www.justice.gov/usao-ndil/pr/former-chicago-police-sergeant-sentenced-six-months-prison-passing-government>  
<https://chicago.suntimes.com/news/ex-cpd-sergeant-gets-6-months-for-swapping-police-info-for-cash/>

**December 14, 2016**

Indicted

Chicago Alderman Willie Cochran (Ward 20) was indicated on 15 counts of wire fraud, bribery and extortion. Cochran—over a three-year period—allegedly paid himself more than \$115,000 from his campaign funds. The allegations triggered an investigation by the U.S. Attorney’s Office into possible evidence of Cochran soliciting bribes from an Illinois attorney who represented developers in Cochran’s ward, and from a liquor store owner.

*Source: Department of Justice Press Release, December 14, 2016*  
<https://www.justice.gov/usao-ndil/pr/city-chicago-alderman-charged-using-money-charitable-fund-pay-gambling-expenses-and>  
*Chicago Sun-Times, December 14, 2016*  
<https://chicago.suntimes.com/news/ald-willie-cochran-indicted-on-federal-fraud-charges-source/>

**December 15, 2016**

Terminated

An investigation by the Office of Executive Inspector General found that Personal Assistants with the Department of Human Services had falsified timesheets resulting in their being overpaid thousands of dollars. Since the Investigation, DHS has fired the Personal Assistants and is seeking to recoup lost funds.

*Source: Office of Executive Inspector General Newsletter*  
[https://www.illinois.gov/oeig/publications/Documents/Newsletter\\_December\\_15\\_2016.pdf](https://www.illinois.gov/oeig/publications/Documents/Newsletter_December_15_2016.pdf)

**December 15, 2016**

Suspended

A former employee of the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) admitted to avoiding sales taxes by purchasing over \$21,000 in personal items using CTA’s tax-exempt letter. In response, the CTA suspended the employee for 30 days without pay and required her to pay restitution. The CTA has changed its guidelines on its tax-exempt letter.

*Source: Office of Executive Inspector General Newsletter*  
[https://www.illinois.gov/oeig/publications/Documents/Newsletter\\_December\\_15\\_2016.pdf](https://www.illinois.gov/oeig/publications/Documents/Newsletter_December_15_2016.pdf)

**December 16, 2016**

Terminated

Six employees were fired and another eight were disciplined after an investigation by the Illinois Department of Traffic Patrol Division discovered the Emergency Traffic Patrol drivers had filed hundreds of “false and fraudulent” reports on assisting stranded motorists from 2012 to 2016.

*Source: Chicago Tribune [16 Dec 2016], Daily Herald [17 Dec 2016]*

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/breaking/ct-emergency-traffic-patrol-discipline-12-18--20161216-story.html>  
<http://www.dailyherald.com/article/20161217/news/161219004/>

**December 22, 2016**

Conviction

Stephanie Lewis, who conspired with others to smuggle the marijuana into Cook County jail pleaded guilty in federal court to one count of conspiracy to commit extortion. The following April she was sentenced to three years and five months in federal prison

*Source: Department of Justice Press Release, December 22, 2016*

[www.justice.gov/usao-ndil/press-release/file/928886/download](http://www.justice.gov/usao-ndil/press-release/file/928886/download)

*Chicago Sun-Times, April 26, 2017*

**December 27, 2016**

Restitution Required

Redflex Traffic Systems Inc. and the U.S. Department of Justice signed a Non-Prosecution Agreement which required the company to pay restitution and compensatory damages to the City of Chicago after one or more Redflex executives were implicated in bribery scheme involving multi-million dollar red-light camera contracts. The amount of the damages required was to be paid after completion civil lawsuits against Redflex by the City of Chicago.

*Source: Department of Justice Press Release, December 27, 2016*

<https://www.justice.gov/usao-ndil/pr/redflex-traffic-systems-enters-non-prosecution-agreement-united-states>

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## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> The Department of Justice's Public Corruption conviction numbers are compiled annually for each of the nation's 94 Federal Judicial Districts. The City of Chicago is entirely in one judicial district, Northern Illinois, which also includes the northern third of the state. Los Angeles is in the Central California District, which also includes Riverside and Santa Ana. But, while most of New York City is in the Southern District of New York, Brooklyn is in the Eastern District. Nonetheless based on DOJ's statistics from 1976 through 2016, the Northern Illinois Judicial District is -the most corrupt judicial district in the country.

<sup>2</sup> Liam Stack, "Dennis Hastert, Ex-House Speaker Who Admitted Sex Abuse, Leaves Prison" *New York Times*, July 17, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/18/us/dennis-hastert-released.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Associated Press, "Arguments in Appeal by Ex-Rep Schock Heard by Court," *Chicago Tribune*, digital edition, April 18, 2018. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/breaking/ct-met-aaron-schock-appeal-charges-20180418-story.html>

<sup>4</sup> Jon Seidal and Fran Spielman, "Ald. Cochran charged with looting fund meant for kids, seniors" *Chicago Sun Times* Dec. 14 2016. <https://chicago.suntimes.com/news/ald-willie-cochran-indicted-on-federal-fraud-charges-source/>

<sup>5</sup>John Byrne "Indicted Ald. Willie Cochran says he won't run for re-election" *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 13, 2017. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/politics/ct-met-willie-cochran-reelection-20171113-story.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Fran Spielman, "Run and Stun," *Chicago Sun-Times*, April 20, 2018, p. 10 and Hal Dardick and Bill Ruthhart, *Chicago Tribune*, "Dorothy Brown plans to run for mayor of Chicago despite federal corruption probe" *Chicago Tribune*, April 20, 2018. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/politics/ct-met-rahm-emanuel-dorothy-brown-20180419-story.html>

<sup>7</sup> Jason Meisner, "Going Rate to Buy a Job in Brown's Office? \$10,000, Employee Tells Feds," *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 28, 2018. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/breaking/ct-met-dorothy-brown-bribery-investigation-20180228-story.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Jodi S. Cohen, "Police oversight ordinance promised transparency but doesn't fully deliver" *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 13, 2017. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/watchdog/ct-police-discipline-transparency-20171113-story.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Andrew Schroedter, "Cook County jail guard beats prisoner on ground but keeps job" *Chicago Sun Times*, April 20, 2016. <https://chicago.suntimes.com/news/cook-county-jail-guard-beats-prisoner-on-ground-but-keeps-job/>

<sup>10</sup> Jason Meisner, "Ex-Cook County Jail lieutenant given 4 months in prison for beating inmate" *Chicago Tribune*, December 21, 2017. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/breaking/ct-met-jail-guard-unreasonable-force-20171221-story.html>

<sup>11</sup> Jeffrey M. Jones, "Illinois Residents Least Confident in Their State Government" *Gallop*, Feb. 17, 2016. <http://news.gallup.com/poll/189281/illinois-residents-least-confident-state-government.aspx>

<sup>12</sup> Jeffrey M. Jones, "Illinois Residents Least Trusting of Their State Government" *Gallop*, April 4, 2013. <http://news.gallup.com/poll/168251/illinois-residents-least-trusting-state-government.aspx>

<sup>13</sup> Lydia Saad, "Half in Illinois and Connecticut Want to Move Elsewhere" *Gallop*, April 30, 2014. <http://news.gallup.com/poll/168770/half-illinois-connecticut-move-elsewhere.aspx>