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TWO CADDO JUDGES INDICTED ON RACKETEERING CHARGES

“Broken Gavel” Investigation Leads to Charges Against Judges Walker and Claville and Local Bail Bondsman

Shreveport, Louisiana . . . Caddo District Judge Michael Walker and Caddo Juvenile Judge Vernon Claville were indicted by a federal grand jury on racketeering charges, United States Attorney Donald W. Washington announced today. WALKER, age 57, and CLAVILLE, age 56, were charged along with LARRY WILLIAMS, age 41, a licensed bail bond agent, with violating the Racketeer Influence and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO).

A nine month investigation code-named “Broken Gavel” led to the indictment which alleges a pattern of racketeering activity consisting of Judges WALKER and CLAVILLE accepting bribe payments in exchange for specific judicial actions. Specifically, the indictment charges that Judge WALKER, in exchange for cash and other things of value, would make himself available to quickly set bonds, reduce bonds, recall arrest warrants, and remove probation holds for individuals who had business in his court. The indictment charges that Judge CLAVILLE, in exchange for cash would make himself available to remove juvenile court holds placed by the Juvenile Court so that defendants could bond out of custody.

Further, the indictment charges that LARRY WILLIAMS and one other individual would present themselves to the public as individuals who had a special connection with the court system and used that connection to secure low bonds and bond reductions, and remove probation holds and juvenile court holds.

Twenty four acts of racketeering are alleged in the indictment, covering a period between May 5, 2007 and July 21, 2007.

If convicted, each defendant faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison, a \$250,000 fine, or both. Sentencing in federal court is determined by the discretion of federal judges and the governing statute. Parole has been abolished in the federal system.

An indictment is merely an accusation and a defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty. Defendants are entitled to a presumption of innocence under the law, and the government has the burden of proving every element of the charges beyond a reasonable doubt.

This investigation was conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Shreveport Resident Agency, the Louisiana State Police, Caddo Parish Sheriff's Office, and the Shreveport and Bossier Police Departments. The case is being prosecuted by First Assistant U.S. Attorney William J. Flanagan and Deputy Criminal Chief Alexander C. Van Hook.

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