



Department of Justice

United States Attorney Michael J. Sullivan
District of Massachusetts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
TUESDAY OCTOBER 28, 2008
WWW.USDOJ.GOV/USAO/MA

CONTACT: CHRISTINA DIORIO-STERLING
PHONE: (617) 748-3356
CHRISTINA.STERLING@USDOJ.GOV

SENATOR DIANNE WILKERSON ARRESTED ON FEDERAL PUBLIC CORRUPTION CHARGES

BOSTON, MA - Eight-term Massachusetts State Senator **DIANNE WILKERSON** was arrested this morning on public corruption charges stemming from her acceptance of more than \$20,000 in cash payments to introduce legislation in the State Senate.

United States Attorney Michael J. Sullivan, Warren T. Bamford, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation - Boston Field Office and Police Commissioner Edward Davis of the Boston Police Department announced today that **DIANNE WILKERSON**, 53, of 74 Howland Street in Boston, Massachusetts, was arrested on a federal Complaint charging her with attempted extortion under color of official right and theft of honest services as a State Senator.

“Public service is a honor,” said U.S. Attorney Sullivan. “Voters and taxpayers expect that elected officials will do what is right for their constituents -- not what is financially best for themselves. Citizens place extraordinary trust in those it gives the greatest authority, and with that authority comes the obligation to act with fairness and honesty. The allegations against Senator Wilkerson are unconscionable, and the citizens of the Commonwealth deserve honest and faithful services of their elected representatives -- uncompromised by secret payments of cash.”

Special Agent in Charge Bamford said, “Public corruption is the FBI’s highest criminal priority. Rooting out public corruption is extremely difficult. The FBI not only has the experience and skills to take on these types of investigations, but also the ability to investigate without any influence from political patron. The FBI will not cease in our efforts to combat public corruption at every level. I thank the men and women of the FBI, USAO, and our law enforcement partners who worked tirelessly to bring this case forward.”

The Complaint alleges that law enforcement authorities were first alerted to **WILKERSON**'s acceptance of cash in connection with the use of her public office in the spring of 2007. The Federal Bureau of Investigation, in conjunction with the Boston Police Anti-Corruption Unit, undertook a long-term covert operation, which included audio and videotaped recordings, commencing in May 2007 aimed at exploring these allegations. It is alleged 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. It is further alleged that, in exchange for 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 Boston Licensing Board.

The Complaint alleges that in an effort to obtain a license for which she was obtaining unreported cash payments, **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.

It is further alleged 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 ordinary public bidding process. In exchange for her assistance in the direct designation of the property, **WILKERSON** took a \$5,000 payment in June 2008.

The Complaint further alleges that, in September 2008, **WILKERSON** requested that another undercover agent, posing as an out of state businessman, pay her \$10,000 in cash. According to the Complaint, in early October 2008, the undercover agent paid **WILKERSON** \$10,000 in cash, on her promise to file the direct designation legislation in the State Senate and to continue to advance the private interests of his business. **WILKERSON** allegedly filed the legislation and was pressing their interests with the House of Representatives and the Boston Redevelopment Authority as recently as last week.

In total, **WILKERSON** allegedly accepted a total of \$23,500 in cash payments, ranging in amounts from \$500 to \$10,000. Each of the eight payments was in connection with the use of her office as a State Senator.

If convicted **WILKERSON** faces up to 20 years imprisonment, 3 years of supervised release and a \$250,000 fine on each of the charges.

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation - Boston Field Office, in conjunction with the Boston Police Department Anti-Corruption Unit and the Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation - Boston Field Office. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney John T. McNeil in Sullivan's Public Corruption and Special Prosecutions Unit.

The details contained in the Complaint are allegations. The defendant is presumed to be innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

###