

# Ex-political aide in La. pleads guilty to bribe

ALEXANDRIA, VA (AP)—A Louisiana congressman demanded bribes in exchange for his help in promoting a pair of business deals in Africa, according to court documents filed Wednesday with a guilty plea by one of the congressman's former staffers.

Brett Pfeffer, 37, a former legislative director to Rep. William Jefferson, D-La., pleaded guilty to aiding and abetting bribery of a public official and conspiracy. He could get 20 years in prison when sentenced March 31.

A spokeswoman for Jefferson declined to comment.

Specifically, Pfeffer said in federal court that a congressman demanded bribes in exchange for his assistance in brokering two African telecom deals.

Court documents did not identify the congressman by name, referring to him only as "Representative A." But the documents make clear that Jefferson is the congressman.

According to the documents, Pfeffer was employed

as a legislative assistant by the congressman from 1995 through 1997. That is when Pfeffer served as a legislative aide to Jefferson, holding titles that included legislative director.

Pfeffer agreed to cooperate with prosecutors and testify if needed.

The conspiracy took place in 2004 and 2005, years after Pfeffer had left Jefferson's office, according to authorities.

Pfeffer said in court that a congressman had solicited his assistance in promoting business opportunities in Nigeria and Ghana. The congressmen demanded 5 percent to 7 percent of the newly formed African companies in exchange for his help promoting the deal to African government officials and others, according to Pfeffer.

Prosecutor Mark Lytle said the congressman and Pfeffer traveled to Ghana in July to promote a similar deal there.

Pfeffer's attorney, Paul Knight, declined to comment.

Court records give no in-

dication how much money Jefferson stood to receive. That amount will be determined later as part of Pfeffer's sentencing.

Prosecutors have been investigating Jefferson in connection with a telecommunications deal involving a Kentucky-based company that specialized in providing high-speed Internet access over Nigeria's copper telephone wires.

The FBI raided Jefferson's home in August and, according to published reports, carted off cash from a freezer.

The FBI also raided the Maryland home of Nigerian Vice President Atiku Abubakar, seeking documents connecting him and his wife to the congressman and the telecommunications deal.

Jefferson was elected to the House in 1990, becoming the first black congressman from Louisiana since Reconstruction. He represents most of New Orleans, including sections of the city that were hardest hit by Hurricane Katrina.

# Attempted murder trial looks at race

MOORHEAD, Minn. (AP) - Jurors in a small town on the northern Plains face a trial that involves allegations that a White man shot a Black man just because of his race.

James Waltz, 67, is charged with attempted murder, assault and terroristic threats in the November 2004 shooting of Ricky Davis outside a bar in International Falls, a city of 8,300 people in far northern Minnesota.

The trial was moved to Red Lake Falls, a farm town of about 4,300 people in northwestern Minnesota, because of pretrial publicity and an incident in which potential jurors saw Waltz in handcuffs.

Opening statements were scheduled for Monday afternoon.

Police said Waltz had told a neighbor he hoped to kill a Black person someday.

"This is something we certainly would never expect in our community," International Falls Mayor Shawn Mason said. "The vast majority of us are shocked and outraged that it happened."

The alleged racism factor in the shooting also hits home with Joe Sertich, president of a group of junior colleges that includes Rainy River Community College in mostly White International Falls. The college has increased its racial diversity in recent years, primarily by recruiting Black football players.

"This is relevant," Sertich said. "We're very troubled by at least allegedly what was said and what appeared to be some of the motivation."

Witnesses said Waltz was upset that several Black men were in the bar on the night of the shooting. He used racial slurs and said Blacks didn't belong in the town, the criminal complaint said. He allegedly pointed a handgun at three of Davis' friends, all Black.

Waltz followed Davis into an alley and shot him in the stomach, the complaint said. Davis, 30, who underwent surgery after the shooting, was arrested in October following an altercation in which he was stabbed. Charges against him and two other men were later dismissed. He had been living in International Falls for the past couple of years, but his whereabouts since his October arrest are unknown.

Many people in International Falls are unwilling to discuss the case.

"My guess is that in any town people wouldn't want to comment on it, whether it's in Minnesota, North Dakota or Wisconsin," said Chuck Samuelson, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Minnesota. "This is about race and it's about violence."

International Falls Police Chief Chris Raboin, public defender Bruce Biggins and county prosecutor Jennifer Hasbargen did not return calls seeking comment.



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