

Two Boston City Hall Aides Convicted of Conspiring to Extort Music Festival Production Company

The City of Boston's Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Timothy Sullivan, and Kenneth Brissette, the Director of the City's Office of Tourism, Sports and Entertainment were convicted today by a federal jury in Boston in connection with extorting a music festival production company operating on City Hall Plaza.

Brissette and Sullivan both were convicted of Hobbs Act conspiracy, and Brissette was also convicted of Hobbs Act extortion. The Court has not yet scheduled sentencing dates.

"This afternoon, a federal jury convicted Kenneth Brissette and Timothy Sullivan of extorting a private business to hire union labor that they did not want or need," said United States Attorney Andrew E. Lelling. "Private companies that want to do business in Boston have the right to hire anyone they want – union or not – without fear of being threatened with economic disaster by government officials. That is the law. This was a hard fought victory, and one that reaffirms our commitment to take on cases that are in the public interest."

"The FBI thanks the jury for their service and thoughtful deliberations," said Joseph R. Bonavolonta, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Field Division. "Today's verdicts show that public officials cannot use their positions to extort those who choose to use non-union labor. The FBI will not stand idly by while hard-working individuals are bullied and strong-armed by public servants."

Everyone deserves access to a level playing field, and the excuse of “business as usual” isn’t good enough to earnest citizens who rely on their own local governments to do right by them and their families. Let this case be a warning to municipal workers everywhere, it is the taxpayers they serve and answer to at the end of the day.”

“Today’s convictions affirm the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General’s commitment to protecting the American workers from extortion and unlawful influence. The defendants used threats of financial harm to obtain wages from a television production company for services that were not needed or required. We will continue working with our law enforcement partners to combat this type of criminal activity,” said Michael C. Mikulka, Special Agent-in-Charge, New York Region, U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General.

Between June and September 2014, while a music festival production company was awaiting the issuance of certain permits and approvals required for its event, and seeking an agreement from the City of Boston to use City Hall Plaza for events beyond 2017, Brissette and Sullivan repeatedly advised the company that it would need to hire members of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) Local 11 to work the event. Local 11 had attempted to obtain work from the production company since March 2013. The production company told Brissette and Sullivan that it had already entered into a contract with a non-union company and hired all of its labor. Nevertheless, on Sept. 2, 2014, three days before the music festival was scheduled to begin, Brissette and Sullivan insisted that half of the production company’s labor force consist of union members. The production company agreed to hire nine members of Local 11 and entered into a contract with the union because they feared the company would be financially ruined if they did not accede to the these City officials’ demands.

The charge of extortion provides a sentence of up to 20 years in prison, three years of supervised release and a fine of \$250,000. The charge of conspiracy to extort provides a sentence of up to 20 years in prison, three years of supervised release and a fine of \$250,000. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

U.S. Attorney Lelling, FBI SAC Joseph R. Bonavolonta, and DOL OIG SAC Mikulk Splagounias made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Laura J. Kaplan and Kristina E. Barclay of Lelling's Criminal Division are prosecuting the case.