



U.S. Department of Justice

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Monday, July 22, 2019

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**Public Affairs**

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### **D.C. Government Contractor Sentenced to 6 Months for Making Illegal Conduit Campaign Contributions to D.C. Council Candidates**

**Defendant Also Received a Suspended Sentence of 36 months for Committing Fraud and  
Perjury to Illegally Obtain Contracting Preferences**

WASHINGTON – Keith Forney, 60, formerly of Clinton, Md., was sentenced on Friday to 6 months in prison for making 11 illegal campaign contributions to three different campaigns for D. C. Council. Forney was also sentenced to an additional 36 months, suspended, for fraud, perjury, and corrupt election practices.

The announcement was made by U.S. Attorney Jessie K. Liu, Charles A. Dayoub, Acting Special Agent in Charge, Criminal Division, FBI Washington Field Office, and District of Columbia Inspector General Daniel W. Lucas.

Forney is the owner of Forney Enterprises, Inc. (FEI), a general contracting company located in the District of Columbia. In April 2019, he was convicted of the campaign finance violations, three counts of fraud, two counts of perjury, and one count of corrupt election practices following a trial in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. The fraud and perjury convictions stemmed from Forney falsely claiming to live at a D.C. address in order to obtain preference points for FEI in bidding for D.C. government contracts.

The Honorable Michael O’Keefe sentenced Forney on July 19, 2019 to 6 months of incarceration for the conduit campaign contribution counts and imposed a 36 month suspended sentence in total for the fraud, perjury, and corrupt election practices counts. Forney was also placed on three years of probation and ordered to perform 1,000 hours of community service and pay a \$11,500 penalty.

According to the government's evidence, FEI was a general contractor located in the District of Columbia. The District government had a preference program for local businesses when bidding for D.C. government contracts. The Department of Small and Local Business Development (DSLBD) certified that local businesses were eligible for preferences in certain categories. One of the categories was resident-owned business (ROB). The ROB category was worth five preference points, meaning that a bid was evaluated as if it was 5% less than the actual bid amount. On average, FEI bid for 15-30 D.C. government contracts per year using the ROB preference points. All of the contracts were worth over \$1 million.

The evidence at trial established that in 2005, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2016, Forney submitted applications to DSLBD falsely listing an address in the District of Columbia as his residence in order to obtain the ROB preference points. On the 2014 and 2016 applications, Forney certified under penalty of perjury that the applications were correct. Forney never lived at the address he provided. He had purchased the property in 2005 when it was being leased to a tenant. Forney continued to rent the property out while using the address for the ROB designation. Forney also obtained a D.C. driver's license and a D.C. voter registration with the address of the rental property. He then submitted these documents to DSLBD to make it appear that he lived there.

Forney's conviction for corrupt election practices was based on his July 2007 application for D.C. voter registration. The evidence at trial established that he falsely certified on the application that he was not registered to vote in any other jurisdiction when in fact he was registered to vote in Maryland. Forney continued to vote in Maryland after registering to vote in D.C. and did not cancel his Maryland registration until 2015. Forney also obtained Maryland and D.C. driver's licenses on the same day.

The evidence at trial on the campaign finance charges established that Forney made the maximum allowable donations as an individual and on behalf of FEI to three candidates running for the D.C. council. Forney then directed associates to make personal contributions to these same candidates. Forney used FEI funds to reimburse the associates for the contributions.

In announcing the sentence, U.S. Attorney Liu, Acting Special Agent in Charge Dayoub, and District of Columbia Inspector General Lucas commended the work of those who investigated the case from the FBI's Washington Field Office and the District of Columbia Office of the Inspector General. They also expressed appreciation for the assistance provided by Assistant U.S. Attorney Daniel Lerner; Financial Analyst Bryan J. Snitselaar; Paralegal Specialists C. Rosalind Pressley, Joshua Fein, and Amanda Rohde; former Paralegal Specialists Toni Anne Donato and Kristy Penny; and former Criminal Investigator Juan Juarez. They also cited the efforts of Assistant U.S. Attorneys Anthony Saler and Andrea Duvall who prosecuted the case.