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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

District of Maryland

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, August 8, 2017

**Former Government Employee Sentenced To 15 Months In
Prison For Receipt Of Illegal Gratuities And
Impersonation Of A United States Immigration Officer**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Baltimore, Maryland – U.S. District Judge George L. Russell sentenced John Theis, age 40, of Sparrows Point, Maryland, today to 15 months in prison, followed by 1 year of supervised release for the receipt of illegal gratuities and impersonation of a United States officer.

The sentence was announced by Acting United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Stephen M. Schenning; Special Agent in Charge Mark Tasky of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Office of Inspector General (OIG); Special Agent in Charge Gordon B. Johnson of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Baltimore Field Office; and Special Agent in Charge Kimberly Lappin of the Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation, Washington, D.C. Field Office.

According to his plea agreement, from January 2015 through his resignation in September 2015, Theis worked at the Department of Homeland Security, United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) in Baltimore, Maryland. Theis was an Immigration Services Officer (ISO), whose duties and responsibilities included adjudicating immigration and citizenship cases and granting permanent residence status.

This was required to obtain approval for any outside employment and no such requests had been submitted by This seeking or gaining such approval.

From 2014 and through his departure from federal service, This accepted cash in return for promising favorable immigration adjudications for a number of aliens. On one occasion, while working at USCIS, This advised an alien on the documents needed for a green card approval. Additionally, This took photos of the applicant's case file from a USCIS database. In exchange, This received approximately \$500 from the alien applicant.

Beginning in December of 2014 through February 2015, This and a co-conspirator agreed to work together in an immigration business to assist immigrants with getting their paperwork approved through USCIS. This would do presentations at an immigration program known as Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA). There, This would wear clothes that identified him as an immigration officer in order to influence new clients into paying him for assistance with immigration paperwork.

In April 2015, This went on disability leave after making false statements about his ability to work. He also took various forms of paid leave and never returned to the USCIS.

On September 29, 2015, This resigned from government service and left for Brazil in October 2015. He continued to do immigration work in Brazil while holding himself out to be a special agent with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) until his return to the United States and arrest in December 2016.

The approximate value of gratuities This received was over \$15,000. He also received over \$1,600 in disability benefits to which he was not entitled. Judge Russell ordered This to pay \$1,600 in restitution to the Department of Labor.

Acting United States Attorney Stephen M. Schenning commended DHS OIG, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Office of Professional Responsibility, USCIS, FBI, and IRS for their work in the investigation. Mr. Schenning thanked Assistant U.S. Attorneys Sandra Wilkinson and Paul E. Budlow, who prosecuted the case.

Component(s):

USAO - Maryland

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