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By **RICHARD BURGESS**  
 Advocate Acadiana bureau  
 Published: Oct 20, 2010

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LAFAYETTE — A Lake Charles man accused of overbilling the state prison system for more than \$170,000 in fertilizer pleaded guilty to federal mail fraud charges on Tuesday.

Wallace “Gene” Fletcher, 69, faces up 20 years in prison and up to \$250,000 in fines and restitution.

Fletcher was indicted last year in an investigation into contracts his company had in 2004 and 2005 to provide fertilizer for prison farms operated by Prison Enterprises, an agency within the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections.

Fletcher admitted that he “routinely billed” the agency for more fertilizer than his company actually delivered, according to a summary of the federal charges that he signed as part of his guilty plea on Tuesday.

Fletcher’s case is one of three connected to an investigation of Prison Enterprises fertilizer contracts and horse sales.

The former director of the agency, James H. “Jim” Leslie, was sentenced in May to five months in prison and five months of home incarceration for witness tampering.

Leslie had also faced three counts of mail fraud in connection with an investigation into the sale of horses at Prison Enterprises without following requirements for public auction or bids.

U.S. District Judge James Brady dismissed those charges in August in a ruling that said the horse sale allegations might be considered a violation of the state ethics code but not a federal crime.

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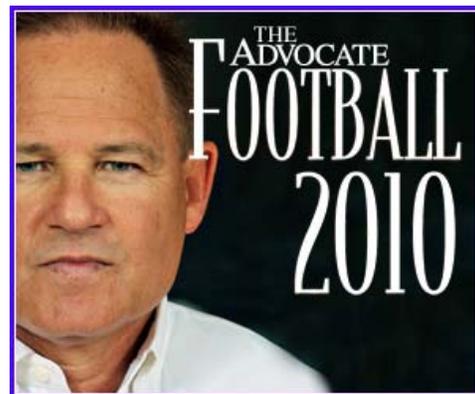
“NO DICE” vs “NO PROBLEM”

PROMOTIONS

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A retired Louisiana State Penitentiary horse trainer, Julius H. "Buddy" Truax, pleaded guilty to mail fraud in connection with the horse sales by Prison Enterprises and received a suspended sentence of one-month probation in May.

The judge in the case said Truax sold the horses at the request of a superior and probably did not understand the requirement that the state horses be sold through a public bid process.



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tradewinns:

wow!!! with those tough sentences handed out already, flechter must be shaking in his shoes! if he is, it's because he's laughing too hard. heck they're just stealing taxpaqyer's money. taxpayers are use to it and don't expect any retribution to anyone anymore. 20 years sounds about right. if he's still around when he's 89, turn him lose. he should have been caught earlier when he was younger. maybe a stiff sentence will influence others not to steal!

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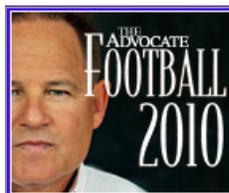
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