

Department of Justice

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FORMER STATE OFFICIAL CONVICTED OF BRIBERY SCHEME INVOLVING LOUISIANA STATE BOARD OF COSMETOLOGY

BATON ROUGE, LA - United States Attorney Walt Green announced today the conviction of a former official of the Louisiana State Board of Cosmetology who engaged in a bribery scheme to sell answers to upcoming Board-administered cosmetology examinations for cash.

WINN E. JOHNSON, age 71, of Boyce, Louisiana, has been charged in a Bill of Information with two counts of using the telephone in aid of bribery, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1952. This morning, JOHNSON appeared before Chief U.S. District Judge Brian A. Jackson and pled guilty.

As described in Court earlier today, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Louisiana Office of the State Inspector General opened an investigation involving JOHNSON and others in 2013, based in part on allegations that JOHNSON would accept cash from individuals who were scheduled to take Board examinations. JOHNSON acknowledged in Court today that on three different occasions, he met with an individual whose wife, JOHNSON believed, was seeking to obtain a cosmetology license. Each time, JOHNSON provided the individual with answers to an upcoming Board examination, in exchange for \$500 in cash. JOHNSON used his cellular telephone to arrange the meetings, which took place on various dates in 2014 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Louisiana Inspector General Stephen Street commented: "We have zero tolerance for those who compromise the integrity of government in exchange for monetary gain. It undermines the entire system and is an enormous disservice to the taxpayers. We will continue working with the FBI and United States Attorney to make sure that anyone who does this faces criminal consequences."

U.S. Attorney Green stated: "This case is a reminder that corruption comes in a wide variety of forms. Individuals at all levels of our government can misuse their positions of trust to line their pockets, and it is never acceptable. Working with our partners at the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Louisiana Inspector General's Office, among other agencies, we will pursue these types of allegations whenever they come to our attention. I commend the State Board's leadership on its assistance and cooperation in helping us root out this corrupt actor."

This ongoing investigation is being handled jointly by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Louisiana Office of State Inspector General, with valuable assistance from the Louisiana State Board of Cosmetology. U.S. Attorney Green emphasized that the State Board's leadership has consistently cooperated with the investigation. The matter is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Alan A. Stevens, who serves as a Deputy Chief of the Criminal Division.

