

PRESS RELEASE

Former Department of Transportation Employee Pays \$500 Penalty for Allegedly Accepting Gifts from Contractor

January 15, 2009

The Enforcement Division of the Office of State Ethics (OSE) entered into a consent order on January 14, 2009 with Raymond Cox of Plymouth, CT. No longer a state employee, Cox served as an Assistant Rail Administrator for the Department of Transportation (DOT) at the time of the alleged violations. He paid a \$500 civil penalty for allegedly accepting gifts from a contractor. Cox denied accepting the gifts but agreed to pay the fine to avoid costly litigation.

In early 2003, Cox, on behalf of the DOT, awarded Merritt Builders, Inc. a contract to perform certain renovation work at the DOT's offices located at Union Station in New Haven. Between June 1, 2003 and May 31, 2004, Cox received several thousand dollars in cash from Louis Testa, the owner of Merritt Builders, Inc., which Cox then gave to others. He also received a television from Testa, which he gave to a relative.

By allegedly accepting gifts from Testa, even though he did not keep the gifts for himself but rather passed them on, Cox violated Connecticut General Statutes § 1-84(m), which prohibits a state employee from accepting any gift from any person the employee knows or has reason to know is doing business with or seeking to do business with the employee's department or agency. The conduct also violated Connecticut General Statutes § 1-84(c), which prohibits a state employee from using his position to obtain financial gain for himself.

Cox was previously convicted of theft involving federal programs and witness tampering relating to this incident, and has paid \$3,925 in fines and restitution in addition to being sentenced to two months in prison and three years probation. He denies any violation of the ethics code sections noted above.

“Accepting a gift from a contractor is a violation of the Code of Ethics, even if a state employee does not make use of the gift but rather passes it on to someone else,” said OSE Executive Director, Carol Carson.

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