

July 2, 2014
For Immediate Release

Contact: [Steve Walker](#) (619) 531-3890
[Tanya Sierra](#) (619) 531-3315
En Español [Jesse Navarro](#) (619) 531-3053

South Bay Corruption Case Ends; Results in Across-the-Board Guilty Pleas, Jail Time, Community Service, Home Detention & Fines

All Defendants Held Responsible for Crimes; Case Leads to Positive Change

San Diego County District Attorney [Bonnie M. Dumanis](#) announced today the end of a wide-ranging public corruption case involving 18 defendants connected to three school districts in South County, including Sweetwater Union High School District, Southwestern College and the San Ysidro School District. The defendants – who included administrators, trustees and contractors – were originally indicted by a grand jury in December 2012 on multiple counts including bribery, perjury, filing a false instrument, influencing an elected official and obtaining something of value to influence a member of a legislative body.

The cases centered on a ‘pay-for-pay’ culture with businesses that were awarded voter-approved bond projects worth hundreds of millions of dollars. The successful prosecution, believed to be the largest of its kind in San Diego County, came to an end as the last sentence was handed down by Superior Court Judge Ana España on Monday.

Highlights from the cases include:

- eight guilty pleas to felony crimes
- 12 guilty pleas to misdemeanor crimes
- more than \$80,000 in fines
- 1,140 hours of community service
- positive changes in leadership and policies at the school districts involved
- proposed statewide legislation designed to prevent similar cases

“These defendants were greedy board members and administrators who lost sight of the students and teachers they were supposed to serve,” DA Dumanis said. “For years, public officials regularly accepted what amounted to bribes in exchange for their votes on multi-million dollar construction projects. The public corruption was nothing short of systemic and I’m very proud of our office’s work to stop it.”

During the course of the case, defendants pleaded guilty one-by-one, creating reverberations and reform across the state related to school board campaign contributions and school bond contract oversight. Four trustees at Sweetwater Union High School District resigned or were removed from

office, one San Ysidro school board trustee resigned from office, and one Southwestern College board member cannot run for elected office for four years.

As the cases moved through the criminal justice system, the court properly used its discretion to reduce some of the convictions to misdemeanors. Sentencing judges consider numerous factors including the defendant's criminal history, the seriousness of the offense as compared to co-defendants, public harm, mitigating factors such as collateral consequences to the defendants, and aggravating factors such as amounts of personal gain.

"The fact that some charges were reduced or dismissed during the pendency of these cases does not diminish the fact that justice was ultimately obtained, public officials were held accountable for their criminal behavior, and a culture of corruption has been dismantled," DA Dumanis said. "Deputy DAs Leon Schorr, Tiffany Scott and DA Investigator Vince Giaime did an outstanding job prosecuting this long and complicated case."

By making reasonable pre-trial settlement offers, the District Attorney's Office served the interests of justice while saving taxpayer dollars and scarce judicial resources. It also avoided what would have likely been a six-month-long trial and allows the DA's Office to continue looking into other allegations of public corruption.

The defendants from the school districts, who were entrusted with making decisions on behalf of the best interests of students and schools, received tens of thousands of dollars worth of meals, tickets and hotel stays from construction companies vying for voter-approved bond projects. Shortly after board members received financial favors, they approved contracts with the contractors for bond projects stemming from Sweetwater's \$644 million Proposition O and Southwestern College's \$389 million Proposition R.

Between 2008 and 2011, the defendants frequented San Diego-area restaurants with contractors and others racking up hundreds of dollars in food and drinks at a time, in some cases reaching more than \$1,000 per outing. Defendants were given Los Angeles Lakers playoff tickets, concert tickets, theater tickets, Rose Bowl tickets, Southwest Airlines tickets and trips to Pebble Beach and Napa Valley. Officials did not report the gifts on their Statement of Economic Interest, as required by state law. In other instances, administrators and trustees solicited cash for their children's beauty pageants or national conferences held on the East Coast. They also demanded campaign donations and other favors.

As a result of this prosecution, and in addition to the sentences and school board resignations, the impact has been far reaching. The case prompted Assembly Bill 1431, which is currently making its way through the state legislature and seeks to ban school and community college administrators from soliciting or accepting campaign donations for their elected officials. A citizens group filed a civil law suit to cancel more than \$41 million in contracts against three of the companies involved in wining and dining South Bay school officials. There has also been a major loss of income to contractors and their companies involved in this case, which has set an example for their associates around the state that such corruption won't be tolerated.

Below is a chart listing each defendant, their role and their status.

DEFENDANT	ROLE	STATUS
Jesus Gandara	Superintendent of Sweetwater Union High School District from September 2006- September 2011	<p>On 4/4/14, Gandara pleaded guilty to violating Penal Code § 182(a)(1), a felony, and Government Code § 89503, a misdemeanor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On 6/27/14 he was sentenced to the following: • 220 days custody, 60 actual, remainder CPAC • 3 years summary probation • \$7,994 fine • 120 hours of community service
Greg Sandoval	Sweetwater board member through December 2011 & Southwestern College VP until late 2008	<p>On 4/4/14, Sandoval pleaded guilty to violating Penal Code § 182(a)(1), a felony, and Government Code § 89503, a misdemeanor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On 6/20/14, Sandoval was sentenced to the following: • 180 days custody- 45 actual, remainder CPAC • 3 years summary probation • \$7,994 fine • 120 hours of community service
Pearl Quiñones	<p>Sweetwater Board Member- reelected in November 2012</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removed from office 	<p>On 3/18/14, Quinones pleaded guilty to violating Penal Code § 182(a)(1), a felony, and Government Code § 89503, a misdemeanor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On 4/28/14, Quinones was sentenced to the following: • 90 days custody via CPAC • 3 years summary probation • \$7,994 fine • 10 days public work service
Arlie Ricasa	<p>Sweetwater board member – reelected in November 2010</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resigned from the board in December 2013 	<p>On 12/18/13, Ricasa pled guilty to violating Government Code § 89503, a misdemeanor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On 4/9/14, Ricasa was sentenced to the following: • 33 months summary probation

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80 hours community service • \$4,589 fine
Gary Cabello	Formerly employed by Alta Vista Financial & Cabrera Capital Markets	<p>On 10/24/13, Cabello pleaded guilty to two counts of violating Penal Code § 182(a)(1), felonies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentenced on 4/7/14 • Judge España reduced both PC 182(a)(1) felonies to misdemeanors pursuant to 17(b) authority • Received 3 years summary probation, 100 hours community service, and \$7,994 fine
Henry Amigable	Formerly employed by Gilbane and Seville Construction Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperated- testified 	<p>On 3/23/12, Amigable pleaded guilty to one count of violating Education Code § 35230, a misdemeanor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On 3/1/13, Amigable was sentenced to 3 years summary probation
Rene Flores	Owner of Seville Group, Inc. (SGI) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperated- testified 	<p>On 4/26/12, Flores pleaded to one count of violating Penal Code § 659, a misdemeanor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was on informal probation to court until 6/30/14
Paul Bunton	Owner of BCA Architects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperated- testified 	<p>On 3/26/12, Bunton pleaded guilty to one count of violating Penal Code § 659, a misdemeanor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • probation terminated 6/20/14 •
Jeff Flores	Owner of Seville Construction Services (SCS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperated 	<p>On 6/24/14, Flores pleaded guilty to Penal Code § 659, a misdemeanor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probation denied • \$1,000 fine
Bertha Lopez	Sweetwater Board Member- reelected in November 2012 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removed from office 	<p>On 4/24/14, Lopez pleaded guilty to violating Government Code § 89503, a misdemeanor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On 6/24/14, Lopez was sentenced to the following: • 3 years summary probation • \$4,589 fine • 40 hours community service

Jim Cartmill	Sweetwater Board Member- reelected in November 2010 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removed from office 	On 4/24/14, Cartmill pleaded guilty to violating Government Code § 89503, a misdemeanor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On 6/4/14, Cartmill was sentenced to the following: 3 years summary probation \$4,589 fine 40 hours community service
Nick Alioto	VP of Finance & Business Affairs at Southwestern College from July 2009 through February 2011	On 12/6/13, Alioto pleaded guilty to violating Penal Code § 32, a felony <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentenced on 1/30/14 Felony reduced to misdemeanor pursuant to Judge's 17(b) authority 3 years summary probation, \$7,994 fine, 160 hours of community service
John Wilson	Facilities Director at Southwestern College through end of 2009	On 12/6/13, Wilson pleaded guilty to violating Penal Code § 32, a felony <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentenced on 1/7/14 Felony reduced to misdemeanor pursuant to Judge's 17(b) authority 3 years summary probation, \$7,994 fine, and community service
Raj Chopra	President of Southwestern College until November 30, 2010	On 10/29/13, Chopra pleaded guilty to violating Government Code § 87203, a misdemeanor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On 4/7/14, sentenced to 3 years summary probation, fine, and community service
Jorge Dominguez	Southwestern board member from 2007 until end of 2010	On 12/6/13, Dominguez pleaded guilty to violating Penal Code § 32, a felony <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On 4/22/14, Judge España reduced felony PC 32 to misdemeanor pursuant to 17(b) authority 3 years summary probation, 80 hours community service, \$4,589 fine
	Southwestern board member until end	On 12/6/13, Salcido pleaded guilty to

Yolanda Salcido	of 2010 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot run for elected office for 4 years from date of sentencing 	violating Government Code § 81004, a misdemeanor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On 4/22/14, Salcido was sentenced to 3 years summary probation, 120 hours community service, \$5,000 fine
Manuel Paul	Former Superintendent of San Ysidro School District	On 12/6/13, Paul pleaded guilty to violating Government Code § 81004(b), a misdemeanor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On 6/24/14, Paul was sentenced to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 years summary probation \$4,589 fine 40 hours community service
Yolanda Hernandez	San Ysidro School District Board Member <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resigned from office in April 2014 	On 10/29/13, Hernandez pleaded guilty violating Government Code § 81004(b), a misdemeanor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On 4/29/14, Hernandez was sentenced to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 years summary probation \$4,589 fine 40 hours community service