

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
District of Massachusetts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Boston City Official Charged with Union-Related Extortion

BOSTON – The City of Boston's Director of the Office of Tourism, Sports and Entertainment was arrested this morning after a federal grand jury indicted him in connection with the extortion of a music festival production company.

Kenneth Brissette, 52, was indicted for extorting a company, which had already contracted with a non-union company to provide workers for a September 2014 festival, to hire members of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees ("IATSE"), Local 11 ("Local 11").

According to the indictment, in order to stage its twice-yearly musical festivals, the company was required to apply for and receive permits from the City of Boston for each festival. At the relevant time, Brissette was the Director of the Boston Office of Tourism, Sports and Entertainment, which assists companies seeking to stage events in Boston in securing permits to use at public areas in the city.

It is alleged that between July and September 2014, while the company was awaiting the issuance of certain permits and approvals required for its music festival, Brissette, and at least one other city official, repeatedly advised the company that it would need to hire members of Local 11 to work at the music festival. Local 11 had attempted to obtain work from the company since March 2013. The company told Brissette that it had already entered into a contract with a non-union company and hired all of its labor. Nevertheless, Brissette allegedly insisted that half of the company's labor force consist of union members, although he ultimately agreed that eight members of Local 11 would suffice. As a result of Brissette's demands three days before the music festival the company entered into a contract with Local 11 for eight additional laborers and one foreman. Shortly thereafter, the City of Boston issued the necessary permits.

In closely related activity in the summer of 2014, Brissette was involved in pressuring a non-union production company filming a reality television show in Boston to hire union workers. When the Chief of Operations for the City of Boston and the Director of the Massachusetts State Film Office learned that Brissette had been pressuring a non-union film company to hire union workers, they separately told Brissette that it was not legal to withhold city permits based on a company's union or

non-union status and could not discriminate on the basis of whether or not a company was union or non-union.

The charging statute provides a sentence of no greater than 20 years in prison, three years of supervised release, and a fine of \$250,000. Actual sentences for federal crimes are typically less than the maximum penalties. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

U.S. Attorney Carmen M. Ortiz; Harold H. Shaw, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigations, Boston Field Division; and Jonathan Mellone, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, Office of Labor Racketeering and Fraud Investigations, New York Region made the announcement today. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Laura J. Kaplan and Kristina E. Barclay of Ortiz's Organized Crime and Gang Unit and Public Corruption Unit, respectively.

The details contained in the indictment are allegations. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.