

Department of Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Former Union Official Sentenced for Violent Extortion

An Indiana man and former business agent of Iron Workers Local 395 was sentenced today to more than four years in prison for conspiracy to commit Hobbs Act extortion.

Thomas Williamson Sr., 70, of Schererville, [pleaded guilty on Jan. 24, 2020](#). According to court documents, Williamson organized and led an assault on a group of non-union ironworkers as part of an attempt to obtain a contract to perform construction work on the Plum Creek Christian Academy, a school affiliated with the Dyer Baptist Church in Dyer, Indiana.

In January 2016, Williamson learned that a non-union ironworking company was performing work for the Dyer Baptist Church, which he considered to be in Local 395's "territory." On Jan. 6, 2016, Williamson visited the construction site and made threats to the workers to get them to stop work on the site. Upon being rebuffed, Williamson then visited the church and attempted to persuade church officials to use Local 395 for the project instead of the non-union workers.

The day after these efforts failed, Williamson returned to the construction site along with then-Local 395 president Jeffrey Veach and a group of rank-and-file union members. At Williamson's direction, the union members executed a coordinated and brutal assault on the non-union workers, beating their victims with loose pieces of hardwood, punching them and kicking them. The attack left one of the non-union workers with a broken jaw that required several surgeries and prolonged hospitalization.

Veach also [pleaded guilty](#) to conspiracy to commit Hobbs Act extortion and was separately [sentenced to 42 months in prison](#) in September 2020. Under federal law, both Williamson and Veach will be barred from holding any union position for at least 13 years following the end of their prison sentences.

Acting Assistant Attorney General Nicholas L. McQuaid of the Justice Department's Criminal Division made the announcement.

The FBI's Indianapolis Field Office and the Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, Chicago Regional Office investigated the case.

Trial Attorneys Alexander Gottfried and Robert Tully of the Criminal Division's Organized Crime and Gang Section prosecuted the case. Assistant Chief for Labor-Management Racketeering Gerald Toner provided invaluable assistance in the prosecution of this case. Through its Labor Unit, the Organized Crime and Gang Section supports federal criminal prosecution in cases involving labor-management relations, internal union affairs, and the operation of employee pension and health care plans.

Topic(s):

Labor & Employment

Violent Crime

Component(s):

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