

**Department of Justice  
U.S. Attorney's Office  
Central District of California**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, February 13, 2020

## **Former Labor Union President Convicted Conspiracy, Embezzling Union Health Plan Funds and Lying to Federal Officials**

*LOS ANGELES* – The former president of a Colton-based labor union has been found guilty by a jury of 14 felony charges for stealing nearly \$800,000 from the union's health plan fund, which he used to pay for personal expenses including legal bills and a car loan for his son's Ford Mustang Shelby GT500.

John S. Romero, 73, of Loma Linda, was found guilty late yesterday afternoon of one count of conspiracy, 12 counts of theft in connection with health care, and one count of making a false statement to a government agency. United States District Judge Virginia A. Phillips scheduled an April 27 sentencing hearing, at which time Romero will face a statutory maximum sentence of 130 years in federal prison.

According to evidence presented at his five-day trial, Romero appointed himself president of United Industrial Services Workers of America (UISWA) and the trustee of the UISWA health care plan. Money paid into the plan was supposed to be used exclusively for health care benefits to its participants. Instead, Romero stole the union's health plan funds for the benefit of himself and his immediate family.

In furtherance of his scheme, Romero appointed a sham trustee who had no prior experience with unions. He also actively misled the third-party administrators of the health plan into making improper payments from the health plan.

From 2008 to 2014, Romero embezzled health plan funds to pay a \$110,000 personal civil judgment against himself and his son, John J. Romero, 55, also of Loma Linda. He also embezzled \$40,000 to pay criminal defense lawyers who represented Romero in a separate case. Romero funneled more than \$310,000 to himself by disguising them as rent payments on two properties he owned and held under a shell company. In addition, he stole more than \$300,000 in union health care plan money to make "salary" payments to his family. He also used plan funds to pay off \$25,000 loan on his son's Ford Mustang.

Romero also was convicted of filing a false financial report with the U.S. Department of Labor in which he concealed the existence of more than \$100,000 in union receipts and disbursements that Romero held in a secret bank account and from which he made regular payments to his mistress.

Following the guilty verdicts, Judge Phillips ordered Romero into custody, citing the danger he posed in light of evidence that Romero had attempted to intimidate witnesses who testified against him at trial.

Romero advanced his scheme by appointing his son the secretary and treasurer of the union, and his ex-wife, Evelyn Romero, 71, the UISWA president and trustee after 2010. At this time, Romero was serving a two-year federal prison sentence related to making false statements to federal officials made while he was president of a different labor union. Romero's son, ex-wife, and daughter, Danae Romero, 42, of Loma Linda, have pleaded guilty to criminal charges in the current matter. They are scheduled to be sentenced in the coming months.

This case was investigated by the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General; the U.S. Department of Labor, Employee Benefits Security Administration; and the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Labor Management Standards.

This matter is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Susan S. Har and Aaron B. Frumkin of the General Crimes Section.