

U.S. Department of Justice

United States Attorney

Southern District of Florida

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NEW RELEASE:

Former President of the Broward Teachers Union Indicted For Mail Fraud

A former president of Broward Teachers Union was charged with committing mail fraud.

Wifredo A. Ferrer, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, and Rafiq Ahmad, Special Agent in Charge, Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General (DOL-OIG), Office of Labor Racketeering and Fraud Investigations, made the announcement.

Patrick Santeramo, 67, of the Southern District of Florida, was indicted on two counts of mail fraud, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1341.

According to allegations contained in the court record, Santeramo was the president of the Broward Teacher's Union (BTU) from 2001 to 2011, and previously had served as vice president of the BTU. The BTU and the School Board of Broward County had negotiated a collective bargaining agreement in which the School Board of Broward County agreed to provide an annual payment of \$80,000 to the BTU for the BTU's Accountability Program, which was administered by the BTU.

The collective bargaining agreement allegedly required that all of the money provided by the School Board of Broward County for the Accountability Program was to be used to further the program's goals "in such areas as training, release time for teachers working on accountability projects, guest speakers, etc." The collective bargaining agreement also required the BTU to keep a written record of expenditures charged to the Accountability Program, and to make this information available to the School Board of Broward County.

Court documents further allege that each year, Santeramo would send a letter to the School Board of Broward County to explain how the money dedicated to the Accountability Program had been used during the previous school year. Subsequently, he also would send a letter to the School Board of Broward County requesting the next payment of \$80,000 for the Accountability Program for the upcoming school year. In response to Santeramo's letters explaining the use of the Accountability Program funds, the School Board of Broward County would mail a check for \$80,000 to the BTU.

It is alleged that after the BTU received the \$80,000 payment from the School Board of Broward County, Santeramo authorized payments from the Accountability Program account for himself and at least one other employee of the BTU to which they were not entitled. Santeramo omitted reference to these payments in his letters to the School Board of Broward County. Consequently, Santeramo allegedly misappropriated, and caused to be misappropriated, in excess of \$35,000 between January 2006 and June 2011.

Mr. Ferrer commended the investigative efforts of the DOL-OIG. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Harry C. Wallace, Jr.

A copy of this press release may be found on the website of the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida at www.usdoj.gov/usao/fls. Related court documents and information may be found on the website of the District Court for the Southern District of Florida at www.flsd.uscourts.gov or on <http://pacer.flsd.uscourts.gov>.