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MARTHA COAKLEY
ATTORNEY GENERAL

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Media Contact

Christopher Loh
Emalie Gainey
(617) 727-2543

Former Chelsea Housing Authority Director Arraigned in Connection with Unlawfully Soliciting Campaign Contributions From State Employees

BOSTON – The former executive director of the Chelsea Housing Authority (CHA) has been arraigned in connection with unlawfully soliciting contributions from state employees and other individuals to support multiple campaigns, including that of former Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray, Attorney General Martha Coakley announced today.

Michael McLaughlin, age 67, of Dracut, was arraigned today in Suffolk Superior Court on charges of Unlawful Solicitation by a Public Employee (4 counts), Solicitation in a Public Building (4 counts), and Conspiracy to Solicit in a Public Building (4 counts). At the arraignment, McLaughlin pleaded not guilty to the charges and was released on personal recognizance. Clerk Magistrate Gary Wilson presided over today's arraignment. McLaughlin is due back in court on October 24 for a pre-trial conference.

These [charges](#) stem from an initial investigation by the Office of Campaign and Political Finance (OCPF), which referred the case to the AG's Office for further investigation. In 2012, the AG's Office began an investigation into allegations of campaign finance violations concerning McLaughlin. McLaughlin served as Executive Director of CHA from 2000 until the fall of 2011.

Authorities allege that from approximately 2008 through 2010, McLaughlin directed a CHA employee to seek contributions from fellow CHA employees, and others associated with the CHA, to benefit the Murray Committee. Allegedly, McLaughlin would identify specific CHA employees to be asked to contribute and employees understood that the contribution request was ultimately coming from McLaughlin to support a candidate favored by him.

McLaughlin organized and solicited CHA employees, and others associated with the CHA, to attend three Murray Committee fundraisers held in Methuen between 2008 and 2010. The CHA employee, directed by McLaughlin, allegedly collected political contributions for the benefit of the Murray Committee before each of the fundraisers, and distributed Murray Committee invitations to employees upon receiving their contributions. Authorities allege that employees were typically asked for \$100 and cash contributions were often the preferred method of contributing. In addition to CHA employees, McLaughlin also solicited contributions for each of the fundraisers from numerous other individuals among his personal and professional networks.

All monies collected from CHA employees were then delivered to McLaughlin, with a list of those who contributed.

McLaughlin also allegedly solicited CHA employees to contribute to Israel Reyes' campaign, a 2009 Lawrence mayoral candidate.

Authorities further allege that McLaughlin regularly asked CHA employees, and others associated with the CHA, to perform political work for Murray and Reyes, including holding signs, working at the polls, and other organizational tasks.

On August 29, McLaughlin was [indicted](#) by a Suffolk County Grand Jury. He was arraigned today in Suffolk Superior Court. He is due back in court on October 24 for a pre-trial conference.

These charges are allegations, and defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant Attorney General Edward Beagan, Deputy Chief of Attorney General Coakley's Public Integrity Division, and Assistant Attorney General Jessica Massey on behalf of the Public Integrity Division. It was investigated by Marco DePalma of the AG's Financial Investigations Division, with assistance from the Massachusetts State Police assigned to the AG's Office and the AG's Computer Forensics Lab. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development – Office of the Inspector General, the Massachusetts Inspector General's Office, the Massachusetts Office of Campaign and Political Finance, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation also assisted in this case.

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