



# PRESS RELEASE

## Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation *Chief Richard Weber*

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IRS – Criminal Investigation

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### **Ohio Lobbyist Agrees to Plead Guilty to Extortion**

An Ohio lobbyist agreed today to plead guilty to extortion in connection with a bribery and fraud scheme involving conduit contributions to the campaigns of elected officials, announced Assistant Attorney General Leslie R. Caldwell of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, U.S. Attorney Carter M. Stewart of the Southern District of Ohio and Special Agent in Charge Angela L. Byers of the FBI's Cincinnati Division.

John P. Raphael, 60, of Columbus, Ohio, agreed to plead guilty to a one-count information charging him with a violation of the Hobbs Act.

Raphael was a consultant and lobbyist based in Columbus. From March 2005 to February 2013, a red light camera enforcement company engaged Raphael to seek and obtain lucrative contracts with the cities of Columbus and Cincinnati. During that time, according to admissions made in his plea, which was filed today, Raphael conveyed to the company specific solicitations for campaign contributions on behalf of elected officials in Columbus and Cincinnati, and repeatedly pressured and induced the company to make contributions by advising the company that it would lose its contracts if it did not.

Raphael admitted that, as a result of his actions, the red light camera enforcement company made over \$70,000 in campaign contributions, which were funneled through Raphael in his own name and in the names of his family members, friends and business associates.

The former chief executive officer of the red light camera vendor, Karen L. Finley, previously pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit federal programs bribery and honest services wire and mail fraud.

The case is being investigated by the FBI's Cincinnati Division, Columbus Resident Agency, with the assistance of IRS-Criminal Investigations and the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney J. Michael Marous of the Southern District of Ohio and Trial Attorney Edward P. Sullivan of the Criminal Division's Public Integrity Section.

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