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Former HPOU Officers Plead Guilty to Fraud

The Harris County District Attorney's Office announced the culmination of a four-year long investigation and prosecution of former officials of the Houston Police Officers Union (HPOU). DA investigators and fraud examiners found evidence of theft and misapplication that included:

- fraudulent sales of vehicles in sealed bid auctions;
- misappropriation of checks to the union;
- misuse of credit cards for personal expenditures; and
- mishandling of cash funds from a union parking lot.

On November 3rd, Jeff Larson, the former treasurer of the union and a former police officer, pleaded guilty in the 263rd District Court to misapplying officers' dues and other funds of the union. Larson was sentenced to eighteen months community supervision and fined \$500. As conditions of the agreement, Larson permanently surrendered his Texas police officer license and agreed to pay \$2,100 restitution.

Larson joins two other former union officials who pleaded guilty and have been sentenced for stealing union monies. Former union secretary Ronnie Martin pleaded guilty earlier this year to theft of more than \$20,000 worth of vehicles, cash, and unauthorized credit card charges from 2004 through 2008. Martin was placed on 10 years probation, ordered to surrender his police officer license, and pay back more than \$40,000 in restitution. In addition, former union committee chairman Matt Calley pled guilty to theft of over \$200,000. Calley was sentenced to 20 years in prison for siphoning more than \$650,000 over a seven-year period from the Officer Assistance and Political Action Funds.

"Each year, Houston Police Officers contribute millions of dollars from their own paychecks to support their fellow officers through the HPOU. These defendants' actions put the financial stability of the union at risk and betrayed the trust of the members who relied on them to protect their assets and contributions," stated Assistant District Attorney Matthew Peneguy.

"The resolution of this case successfully closes a long-term effort by the District Attorney's Office to hold these former union officials accountable for violating their fiduciary duties to the members of the Houston Police Officer's union. The union has informed us this effort has led to positive changes in accounting and fiscal policies that will better protect police officer's funds," added Julian Ramirez, Assistant District Attorney. (end)