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**SENATOR ABEL NAZARIO QUIÑONES INDICTED AND ARRESTED FOR
BRIBERY CONCERNING PROGRAMS RECEIVING FEDERAL FUNDS**

SAN JUAN, P.R. – Today, Senator Abel Nazario-Quiñones and seven other defendants were arrested and charged in a one-count indictment alleging theft or bribery concerning programs receiving federal funds, announced W. Stephen Muldrow, United States Attorney for the District of Puerto Rico. The FBI is in charge of the investigation with the collaboration of the Puerto Rico Comptroller's Office, and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Office of Inspector General (OIG).

Defendant Abel Nazario-Quiñones was first elected Mayor of Yauco, a municipality in Southwest Puerto Rico, in 2000, and continued to be the mayor until December of 2016. The other defendants are: Edwin Torres-Gutiérrez, Special Assistant to the Mayor; Claribel Rodríguez-Canchani, Director of Human Resources for the Municipality; Humberto Pagán-Sánchez, Kelvin Ortiz-Vegarra, Ramón Martes-Negrón, Juan Rosario-Núñez, and Eric Rondón-Rodríguez, who were all irregular employees of the Municipality under Mayor Nazario-Quiñones.

In August 2016, during a routine audit of the Municipality's records, the PR Comptroller's Office discovered that there were irregular employees paid by the Municipality of Yauco who either never showed up for work, or showed up sporadically. During the years 2014 until 2016, the defendants conspired and agreed with each other to knowingly embezzle, steal, obtain by fraud, or otherwise without authority convert to the use of any person other than the rightful owner, or intentionally misapply, property valued at more than \$5,000.00 that was owned by, or under the care and custody of the Municipality of Yauco. All in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 371 and 666(a)(1)(A).

The purpose of the conspiracy was for defendant Abel Nazario-Quiñones, with the assistance of defendants Edwin Torres-Gutiérrez and Claribel Rodríguez-Canchani, to pay defendants Humberto Pagán-Sánchez, Kelvin Ortiz-Vegarra, Ramón Martes-Negrón, Juan Rosario-Núñez, and Eric Rondón-Rodríguez from Municipal funds to work on the senatorial campaign of defendant Nazario-Quiñones. A further purpose was for the irregular employees to provide assistance to the campaigns of other party politicians whose support Nazario-Quiñones

would need to win the senatorial election and for a subsequent bid to become President of the Senate.

According to the indictment, defendant Nazario-Quñones signed numerous irregular employment contracts for defendants Pagán-Sánchez, Ortiz-Vegarra, Martes-Negrón, Rosario-Núñez, and Rondón-Rodríguez. The listed justification in each contract was “Necesidad de Servicio” (“Need for Service”). The listed office in each contract was “Oficina del Alcalde” (“Office of the Mayor”). The listed immediate supervisor in each contract was defendant Torres-Gutiérrez, who instructed these irregular employees to report to the Municipality either once a week or once a month. After learning that the municipality was under investigation, Torres-Gutiérrez instructed the employees to report to the Municipality either two times a week or two to three times a month, and then sent them to different offices within the Municipality.

Defendants Pagán-Sánchez, Ortiz-Vegarra, Martes-Negrón, Rosario-Núñez, and Rondón-Rodríguez reported to the Municipality to collect their paychecks and attend meetings in the Annex building with defendants Nazario-Quñones and Torres-Gutiérrez to discuss defendant Nazario-Quñones’ campaign. These five irregular employees sporadically completed time and attendance records, and when they did, Torres-Gutiérrez instructed them to simply sign them and leave the hours worked portion blank.

Defendant Abel Nazario-Quñones ordered defendants Torres-Gutiérrez and Rodríguez-Canchani to direct employees of the Department of Human Resources, either verbally or in writing, to process payroll for the five irregular employees based on false or no documentation to support the payment of wages. Rodríguez-Canchani ordered at least one employee of the Human Resources Department to assist her in creating false time and attendance records and then manipulated the falsely created time and attendance sheets in such a way as to make them appear old.

“Together with our law enforcement partners, our office will continue to aggressively pursue corrupt individuals in the government who defraud their constituents,” said U.S. Attorney W. Stephen Muldrow. “This prosecution serves as a warning to other public officials involved in these types of schemes that they will be punished, and as a promise to taxpayers that such violations of the public trust will not be tolerated.”

“The FBI thanks it’s partners at Office of the Comptroller of Puerto Rico (OCPR) whose diligence is directly responsible for the discovery of this scheme, as well as DOL, the IG and the USAO for their never ending pursuit of justice. As always, we encourage the public to come forth with any kind of information related to these and any other federal crimes. Anonymous tips can be provided at [Tips.FBI.gov](https://tips.fbi.gov) and 787-754-6000,” said Douglas Leff, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation.

“The U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Inspector General investigates allegations of serious misappropriation of federal funds. We would like to thank the United States Attorney’s Office for the District of Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico’s Comptroller’s Office, and the U.S. Department of Education and Social Security Administration’s Offices of Inspector General for their support

and assistance in this investigation,” said Michael C. Mikulka, Special Agent in Charge, New York Region, U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General.

“Once more we see the results of the coordinated efforts between federal agencies and the Office of the Comptroller of Puerto Rico. To the People of Puerto Rico, we want to let them know that they have the certainty and assurance that the Comptroller’s Office remains ever vigilant in the proper use of government property and public funds. We will continue to collaborate with the different supervisory entities in the fight against corruption,” said the Comptroller of Puerto Rico, Yesmín M. Valdivieso.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Scott Anderson. The case was investigated by the Puerto Rico Comptroller’s Office, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Office of Inspector General (OIG), and the FBI. The defendants are facing a maximum term of imprisonment of 10 years, and a fine not to exceed \$250,000.

An indictment is only an accusation and not evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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