

Department of Justice  
U.S. Attorney's Office  
Southern District of Florida

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, April 25, 2016

## **Former President of the Broward Teachers Union Sentenced to Prison for Mail Fraud**

On April 22, 2016, **Patrick Santeramo**, 68, of Stuart, Florida was sentenced by United States District Judge William J. Zloch to 18 months' imprisonment, to run consecutive to the sentence imposed in a parallel state case, for defrauding the Broward County School Board and Broward Teachers Union.

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, Office of Labor Racketeering and Fraud Investigations (DOL-OIG), made the announcement.

Santeramo previously pled guilty to one count of wire fraud. Santeramo was also ordered to serve a two year term of supervised release, upon his release from prison. He must also pay a \$4,000 fine and was required to pay restitution in the amount of \$93,800.

According to the factual proffer, in support of the defendant's plea, Santeramo worked full-time for, and was the president of, the Broward Teachers Union (BTU) from 2001 to 2011. Santeramo resigned from BTU in June 2011.

For many years, dating back to at least the mid-1990s, the collective bargaining agreement between the BTU and the Broward County School Board required that the School Board provide funding for an "Accountability Program" designed to support and enrich the professionalism of Broward County public school teachers through training, release time for teachers working on accountability projects, guest speakers, etc. It also stated that the BTU would keep a written record of expenditures charged to this fund and make this information available to the district.

The BTU's Accountability Program bank records demonstrated that money for the Accountability Program was being disbursed via monthly checks of \$200-\$300 made payable to Santeramo, as well three other BTU employees. During this fraudulent scheme, Santeramo received monthly payments totaling \$34,500, and the other employees received monthly payments totaling \$59,300. The three additional employees were also not entitled to receive the payments (the government did not allege that the three other employees were aware that these payments were unauthorized).

In order to justify the use of the money, Santeramo prepared, or had prepared for him, letters that were mailed to the School Board stating that the BTU had used the money from the previous year to defray the costs of having one of the employees released from regular school employment to support the Accountability Program. The letters never mentioned that Santeramo and the other three employees were receiving unauthorized monthly payments from the Accountability Program that they used for their own benefit and that were not related to any function that they performed for the Accountability Program. Nor did the letters itemize how the Accountability Program funds had been utilized. In addition, these unauthorized transactions were not disclosed to the BTU's executive board members or to School Board officials.

Santeramo furthered this fraud by using the mail to request the disbursement of these funds to the BTU and to deceive the School Board, by alleging that these funds were being used solely for the release of the one employee who worked on the Accountability Program by conducting trainings and conferences as specified in the collective bargaining agreement.

Mr. Ferrer commended the investigative efforts of DOL-OIG. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Harry C. Wallace, Jr. and Miesha Shonta Darrough.

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](http://www.flsd.uscourts.gov) or on <http://pacer.flsd.uscourts.gov>.