

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Northern District of Illinois

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Former Illinois State Senator Pleads Guilty to Fraudulently Receiving Salary and Benefits From Labor Union

CHICAGO — Former Illinois State Sen. THOMAS E. CULLERTON pleaded guilty today to a federal embezzlement charge and admitted fraudulently receiving salary and benefits from a labor union for which he did little to no work.

The guilty plea was announced by John R. Lausch, Jr., United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois; Emmerson Buie, Jr., Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Field Office of the FBI; and Irene Lindow, Special Agent-in-Charge of the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Inspector General in Chicago. The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Amarjeet S. Bhachu and Erika Csicsila.

Cullerton, 52, of Villa Park, Ill., was hired in 2013 by Teamsters Joint Council 25 as a purported union organizer and remained on the payroll until February 2016. In addition to receiving a salary, monthly car and telephone allowances, and bonuses, Teamsters Joint Council 25 also funded Cullerton's participation in Teamsters Local Union 734's health and pension funds, which enabled Cullerton to receive health and welfare benefits.

Cullerton admitted in a plea agreement that he did little to no work as an organizer for the three years he was on the union payroll. When his supervisors requested that he perform his job duties, Cullerton routinely ignored them, the plea agreement states. For the last year he remained on the payroll, Cullerton admitted that he performed no work at all of value for Teamsters Joint Council 25. From March 2013 to February 2016, Cullerton fraudulently obtained from Joint Council 25 and its members approximately \$169,488 in salary, bonuses, and other benefits, approximately \$57,662 in health and pension contributions, and approximately \$21,678 in reimbursed medical claims. Cullerton admitted that he used the money to pay personal expenses, such as his mortgage, utilities, and groceries.

The embezzlement charge is punishable by up to five years in federal prison. U.S. District Judge Robert W. Gettleman set sentencing for June 21, 2022, at 10:30 a.m.

Attachment(s):
[Download Cullerton plea agreement](#)

Topic(s):
Labor & Employment

Public Corruption

Component(s):
[Federal Bureau of Investigation \(FBI\)](#)
[USAO - Illinois, Northern](#)