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Press Release
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**JOINT PRESS RELEASE: SUMMIT COUNTY PROSECUTOR AND OHIO
ETHICS COMMISSION**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

VENDOR PLEADS GUILTY TO BRIBE AND IMPROPER GIFTS

Summit County Prosecutor Michael T. Callahan announced today that James W. Achterman pleaded guilty to one count of bribery and one count of conflict of interest before Judge James Murphy in Summit County Common Pleas Court.

Achterman's pleas today correspond to a plea he entered yesterday in federal court to conspiracy to commit mail fraud. The charges are a result of an ongoing state and federal probe conducted by the Summit County Prosecutor's Office, the Ohio Ethics Commission, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Internal Revenue Service, and the U.S. Attorney's Office.

Achterman admitted that, while doing business with Summit County, from January 18, 1995 through December 1997, he paid one unnamed Summit County Executive employee approximately \$197,000, with the purpose to corrupt that employee or to improperly influence that employee with respect to their duties at the Summit County Executive's Office. The maximum penalty for bribery, a third-degree felony, is up to five years in prison and/or a \$10,000 fine.

Achterman also admitted that while doing business with Summit County, from January 11, 1995 through October 10, 1997, he provided the free use of an apartment located in Akron, Ohio, and a \$1,071.99 dinner at Maisonette Restaurant in Cincinnati, Ohio, for two unnamed Summit County Executive employees, and one night lodging for one unnamed

Summit County Executive employee at the Netherland Plaza, also in Cincinnati.

This is in violation of conflict of interest prohibitions against private parties providing things of value to public servants while doing business with their public agencies. The maximum penalty for conflict of interest, a first-degree misdemeanor, is up to six months in jail and/or a \$1,000 fine.

"We will continue to work with the Task Force to ensure that those who have improperly influenced and defrauded Summit County are criminally prosecuted," Prosecutor Callahan said.

As part of the plea agreement, Achterman agreed to continue to cooperate fully with the Summit County Prosecutor's Office and any other state, federal, county, or city prosecuting and investigatory authorities, including the Ohio Ethics Commission. In return, Prosecutor Callahan agreed to recommend that Achterman's sentence run concurrent with the federal sentence that will be imposed as a result of Achterman's guilty plea to conspiracy on October 12, 1999 in federal court.

"Yesterday and today's events should remind those who do business with public officials that the Ohio Ethics Commission is committed to a fair and ethical playing field for all who attempt to serve the public," explained David E. Freel, Executive Director of the Ohio Ethics Commission.

"Whether it is a bribe or improper gifts to public servants; both are wrong and criminal violations, as the guilty conduct admitted here demonstrates."