

OHIO ETHICS COMMISSION
William Green Building
30 West Spring Street, L3
Columbus, Ohio 43215-2256



Telephone: (614) 466-7090
Fax: (614) 466-8368

www.ethics.ohio.gov

Press Release ***June 9, 2000***

JOINT PRESS RELEASE: PORTAGE COUNTY PROSECUTOR AND OHIO ETHICS COMMISSION

For more information, contact:

Victor V. Viglucci
Portage County Prosecutor
466 South Chestnut Street
Ravenna, Ohio 44266
(330) 297-3850

or

Paul M. Nick
Investigative Counsel
Ohio Ethics Commission
(614) 466-7090

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

FLASK ENTERS GUILTY PLEAS

Edward A. Flask, former Director of the Mahoning Valley Sanitary District, today appeared before Judge Richard M. Markus in the Trumbull County Common Pleas Court and pled guilty to nine criminal felony and misdemeanor charges that he misused his MVSD position for his own personal gain. Flask pleaded guilty to two Felony violations of Having an Unlawful Interest in a Public Contract, two Misdemeanor violations of Soliciting or Receiving Improper Compensation, and five Misdemeanor violations of having a Conflict of Interest. Each of the Fourth Degree Felony counts carries up to 18 months in prison and a fine of up to \$2,500.00, and each of the First Degree Misdemeanor counts carries up to 6 months in jail and a fine of up to \$1,000.00. Penalties could also include restitution. The law also prohibits Flask from holding public office or any public employment for seven years.

The remaining seven counts against Flask were dismissed by Prosecutors in exchange for Flask's guilty pleas. No agreements were made between Flask and the Prosecutors regarding sentencing recommendations to Judge Markus who will sentence Flask after completion of a pre-sentence report by the Trumbull County Probation Department. Prosecutors also agreed to seek no further charges against Flask as a result of his MVSD activities.

Special Prosecutor Victor V. Viglucci, who is the Portage County Prosecuting Attorney, stated: "Today's admissions by Mr. Flask are the result of a long and complex investigation in which many agencies worked together to uncover a breach of the trust placed in a public servant. While sworn to serve the people, Mr. Flask instead chose to serve his own interests. Conviction of these nine charges reveals the serious consequences of such conduct."

The Indictment against Edward A. Flask and his subsequent pleas today are the result of an extensive investigation conducted by Special Prosecutor Viglucci, Assistant Special Prosecutor Paul M. Nick, Investigative Counsel for the Ohio Ethics Commission, and investigators from the Federal Bureau of Investigation – Youngstown Resident Agency and the Ohio Ethics Commission.

David E. Freel, Executive Director of the Ohio Ethics Commission, applauded the efforts of Viglucci and the investigators. "These criminal convictions leave their own low watermark on MVSD," Freel stated. "They should also remind the small percentage of public officials who look to agency vendors for their personal gain, that their own interests can create criminal conflicts that lead to serious and improper influences upon their public actions."

The two felony pleas resulted from Flask's authorization of a series of purchases by the Mahoning Valley Sanitary District from two vendors, Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Ohio and Ohio Edison Company. While dealing with them in his public position, Flask was at the same time being paid as a consultant by these vendors. Flask admitted soliciting and accepting consulting fees in excess of \$1.7 million from Blue Cross/Blue Shield from May 1, 1993 through August 11, 1997, and \$270,000 from Ohio Edison from March 22, 1991 through August 11, 1997.

Flask also pled guilty to charges involving, and admitted soliciting or receiving, a total of \$6,493 in improper entertainment and compensation, from the Gilbane Building Company from July 28, 1992 through August 11, 1997. Gilbane was doing business with the MVSD at the time as the project manager for the MVSD's multimillion-dollar capital improvement project. Flask admitted that this entertainment was an improper supplement to his compensation as Director of the MVSD.

Flask admitted soliciting and accepting \$34,000 from Mascaro, Inc. from February 11, 1992 through September 16, 1995. Mascaro, Inc. was a subcontractor to Gilbane Building Company on the MVSD's capital improvement project.

Flask also admitted soliciting or receiving \$3,007 of improper compensation in the form of entertainment and political contributions from McDonald & Company Securities, from March 17, 1994 through June 20, 1996. McDonald & Company Securities was doing business with the MVSD by underwriting bonds. Flask admitted that this was an improper supplement to his compensation as Director of the MVSD.

Flask also pled guilty to Conflict of Interest charges involving the acceptance of money, entertainment or contributions from Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Ohio Edison, McDonald & Company, Gilbane Building Company, and Mascaro, Inc., a subcontractor of Gilbane Building Company on the MVSD capital improvement project.

