



# NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

**TODD P. GRAVES**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **ASSOCIATE CIRCUIT JUDGE INDICTED FOR BRIBERY, CONSPIRACY TO OBSTRUCT JUSTICE BY KILLING FEDERAL WITNESS**

**KANSAS CITY, Mo.** – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that an Associate Circuit Court Judge in Sullivan County was indicted by a federal grand jury today for soliciting a bribe and for conspiracy to obstruct justice by murdering a federal witness.

**Jeffrey D. Sayre**, 37, of Milan, Mo., was charged in a two-count indictment returned by a federal grand jury in Kansas City today. **Sayre** has served as an associate circuit court judge for the 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit in Sullivan County, Mo., since January 1999.

“Public corruption is an ugly stain on any community, even more so when it infects our system of justice,” Graves said at a press conference this afternoon. “Today’s allegations are especially disturbing, because the indictment charges that Judge **Sayre** initiated this bribe. In other words, the indictment alleges not that a defendant offered to bribe a judge, but that the judge sought out the defendant to pursue a bribe.”

Today’s indictment replaces a federal criminal complaint that was filed under seal on April 2, 2003. **Sayre** was arrested early this morning and taken into federal custody.

Mark S. James, Special Agent in Charge of the Kansas City Field Division of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, was also present at today’s press conference. James lauded the work of the various law enforcement agencies involved in the investigation, who were also represented at the press conference.

“The ATF recognizes that working together with our local law enforcement agencies, across federal agency lines, and in partnership with the U.S. Attorney’s Office, we can ensure that the public is made safer and the public trust of our officials is upheld,” James said.

Count One of the federal indictment alleges that **Sayre** solicited a \$10,000 bribe from William Lance May, a defendant in his Sullivan County courtroom. Graves explained that May was arrested on March 22, 2002, on various state drug and firearms violations. After May paid the bribe, the indictment alleges, **Sayre** issued an order to suppress the evidence against May and discharge his case.

Count Two of the federal indictment alleges that, when **Sayre** learned he was the target of a federal investigation, he attempted to hire someone to murder May so that May could not testify against him.

According to the indictment, Sullivan County Prosecuting Attorney James G. Spencer filed a criminal complaint on March 25, 2002, charging May with four counts of violating state drug and firearm laws. May hired a Columbia, Mo., attorney to represent him. The indictment alleges that **Sayre** offered to take care of May's case for less money, and in April **Sayre** told an intermediary that he would take care of the case for \$10,000.

On April 19, 2003, the indictment alleges, **Sayre** met with May at another person's home and accepted the \$10,000 bribe. May then hired a less expensive attorney.

On July 26, 2002, Spencer filed a First Amended Complaint charging May with possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine, possession of methamphetamine, possession with intent to distribute Darvocet, possession of Darvocet, possession of drug paraphernalia, and carrying a concealed weapon. A preliminary hearing was conducted before **Sayre** on that same day, at which time May's attorney filed a motion to suppress evidence. On Sept. 11, 2002, **Sayre** entered an order suppressing the evidence and discharging May in this case.

When **Sayre** learned that May was cooperating in a federal investigation of public corruption, the indictment alleges, he began discussing the need to have May killed so that he would not be able to testify. That conspiracy included a discussion with someone known as the "Gas Man," who was actually an undercover police officer.

"Fortunately, that plot failed," Graves said, "and Judge **Sayre** will now answer charges in the judicial system he is alleged to have betrayed."

Graves cautioned that the charges contained in the indictment are simply accusations, and not evidence of guilt. Evidence supporting the charges must be presented to a federal trial jury, whose duty is to determine guilt or innocence.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney William L. Meiners. The case was investigated by the NITRO (Northwest Missouri Team Response Operation) Task Force, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Milan, Mo., Police Department, the Sullivan County, Mo., Sheriff's Department, and the North Missouri Drug Task Force.

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This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at

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