

Kennedy Aide Sentenced for Wire Fraud and Theft of Government Property

Written by Nick Sanders
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Longtime readers of this blog know that we believe the incidence of fraud committed by government contractors is no higher than that committed by government civil servants—or even by military personnel. We believe that where you find lax internal controls, you will tend to find weak people committing fraud. Thus, we believe that the recent focus on government contractor fraud is no more or less warranted than a focus on fraud within the civil service or within the military.

Lord knows we've published a long list of blog articles covering fraud within all three venues. One need only type in "fraud" in the site search box (located at the top right of the home page) to see the various individuals who've tried, with mixed success, to obtain ill-gotten goods. We'd be saddened by the number of weak-willed people, in all walks of life, but we also remember that these fraudsters are a very small minority of the total population. The vast majority of government contractor employees act with honesty and integrity—as do the vast majority of civil servants and military personnel.

Today's story is short and consistent with other stories of fraud. Today we want to bring your attention to the case of Ngozi Pole, a former Office Manager for the staff of former Senator Edward Kennedy. Mr. Pole was recently sentenced to 20 months in prison, three years of "supervised release," 500 hours of community service, and was ordered to pay the U.S. Government \$77,609 in restitution. Mr. Pole was found guilty of "five counts of wire fraud and one count of theft of government property," according to this Department of Justice [press release](#).

The DOJ press release had this to say about Mr. Pole's actions—

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... beginning in at least 2003 and continuing until January 2007, Pole repeatedly submitted paperwork causing the Senate to pay him larger bonus payments than had been approved by either the chief of staff or former U.S. Senator Edward M. Kennedy. According to the evidence presented at trial, these unauthorized bonus payments totaled more than \$75,000. Pole hid the existence of these unauthorized payments by repeatedly transmitting information to the chief of staff that falsely showed that he received only those payments that had been authorized.

Well, what can we learn from the foregoing?

For starters, we can learn that one should *not* let one's subordinates submit their own compensation paperwork. We might also consider that reports of compensation should come from sources other than those receiving the compensation. Those are two lessons that this incident brings to mind.

This incident also reinforces, once again, that you can find fraud anywhere you find lax internal controls and weak-willed individuals. It doesn't matter whether you are looking within a government contractor or within a military unit, or within a civil service bureau. Or, apparently, within a Senatorial office.