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Tuesday, January 31, 2017

## Cabot Man and Former Federal Employee Pleads Guilty to Conflict of Interest Regarding USDA Contracts

LITTLE ROCK—Christopher R. Thyer, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Arkansas, announced today that Larry Dale Dunkin, 64, of Cabot, pleaded guilty to an Indictment charging him with conflict of interest. Dunkin, a former federal contracting officer for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) personally benefited from contracts he awarded to a company in which his wife had a direct financial interest.

Today's plea hearing took place in Little Rock before Chief United States District Judge Brian S. Miller, who will sentence Dunkin at a later date.

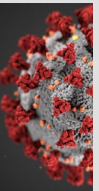
The NRCS, formerly known as the Soil Conservation Service, is an agency of the USDA that provides technical assistance to farmers and other private landowners and managers. It is a relatively small agency, with a mission to improve, protect, and conserve natural resources on private lands through a cooperative partnership with state and local agencies.

During today's change of plea hearing, Dunkin admitted that in March 2013 he knowingly and willfully awarded a \$22,500 contract to Young Enterprises, LLC, a company in which his wife had a direct financial interest. Multiple records indicate that Dunkin's wife was a part-owner of the company, and the mailing address for Young Enterprises, LLC, on file with the Secretary of State was the same address as the residence of Dunkin and his wife.



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Upon Young Enterprise’s completion of the contract, the USDA transferred approximately \$22,500 into a bank account jointly owned by Dunkin and his wife.

The statutory penalty for Title 18, United States Code, Section 208, "Acts Affecting a Personal Financial Interest," more commonly known as "conflict of interest," is not more than five years’ imprisonment, not more than three years of supervised release, a fine of not more than \$250,000, and a \$100 special assessment.

The investigation was conducted by the USDA–Office of Inspector General and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Hunter Bridges. If you have knowledge of or suspect fraud related to USDA programs, you may submit online at <https://www.usda.gov/oig/hotline.php>.

**Topic(s):**  
Public Corruption

**Component(s):**  
USAO - Arkansas, Eastern

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