



U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
District of Maryland*

*Stephen M. Schenning
Acting United States Attorney*

*36 South Charles Street
4th Floor
Baltimore, Maryland 21201*

*410-209-4800
TTY/TDD: 410-962-4462
410-209-4885*

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**Contact SCHNEYDER METELLUS
at (410) 209-4885**

**FORMER GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE PLEADS GUILTY TO RECEIPT OF
ILLEGAL GRATUITIES AND IMPERSONATION OF A UNITED STATES
IMMIGRATION OFFICER**

Baltimore, Maryland – John Theis, age 40, of Sparrows Point, Maryland, pleaded guilty today to receipt of illegal gratuities and impersonation of a United States officer.

The guilty plea was announced by Acting United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Stephen M. Schenning; Special Agent in Charge Mark Tasky of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Office of Inspector General (OIG); Special Agent in Charge Gordon B. Johnson of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Baltimore Field Office; and Special Agent in Charge Kimberly Lappin of the Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation, Washington, D.C. Field Office.

According to his plea agreement, from January 2015 through his resignation in September 2015, Theis worked at the Department of Homeland Security, United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) in Baltimore, Maryland. Theis was an Immigration Services Officer (ISO), whose duties and responsibilities included adjudicating immigration and citizenship cases and granting permanent residence status. Theis was required to obtain approval for any outside employment and no such requests had been submitted by Theis seeking or gaining such approval.

From 2014 and through his departure from federal service, Theis accepted cash in return for promising favorable immigration adjudications for a number of aliens. On one occasion, while working at USCIS, Theis advised an alien on the documents needed for a green card approval. Additionally, Theis took photos of the applicant's case file from a USCIS database. In exchange, Theis received approximately \$500 from the alien applicant.

Beginning in December of 2014 through February 2015, Theis and a co-conspirator agreed to work together in an immigration business to assist immigrants with getting their paperwork approved through USCIS. Theis would do presentations at an immigration program known as Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA). There, Theis would wear clothes that identified him as an immigration officer in order to influence new clients into paying him for assistance with immigration paperwork.

In April 2015, Theis went on disability leave after making false statements about his

ability to work. He also took various forms of paid leave and never returned to the USCIS.

On September 29, 2015, Theis resigned from government service and left for Brazil in October 2015. He continued to do immigration work in Brazil while holding himself out to be a special agent with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) until his return to the United States and arrest in December 2016.

The approximate value of gratuities Theis received was over \$15,000. He also received over \$1,600 in disability benefits to which he was not entitled.

Theis faces a maximum sentence of two years in prison for receipt of illegal gratuities and a maximum sentence of three years in prison for impersonation of a United States officer. U.S. District Judge George L. Russell has scheduled sentencing for August 8, 2017 at 9:30 a.m.

Acting United States Attorney Stephen M. Schenning commended DHS OIG, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Office of Professional Responsibility, USCIS, FBI, and IRS for their work in the investigation. Mr. Schenning thanked Assistant U.S. Attorneys Sandra Wilkinson and Paul E. Budlow, who are prosecuting the case.