



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL HENRY McMASTER
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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McBee Judge, Police Chief Indicted By State Grand Jury

Columbia, S.C. – Attorney General Henry McMaster announced today that Fred D. Stephens, 64, of 821 South Main Street in Bethune, and Joseph D. McLemore, 62, of 150 East Juniper Street in McBee were both indicted on June 14, 2006, by the state grand jury on charges of Official Misconduct in Office, a violation of the common law, and punishable to ten (10) years imprisonment.

Fred D. Stephens currently serves as a Municipal Judge for the Town of McBee, and Joseph D. McLemore serves as the town's Chief of Police.

According to the indictment, during the period March 25, 2005 to October 24, 2005, Stephens and McLemore did engage in acts of misconduct in breach of their duties to the public of good-faith, honesty and accountability, such acts consisting of a deliberate and willful failure to enforce the laws of the state faithfully, and in a manner consistent with the obligations and duties of their offices.

Specifically, Stephens and McLemore did assist certain persons charged with crimes in avoiding prosecution by coercing them to surrender property to the Town of McBee, such items including automobiles and/or currency, in exchange for having criminal charges against them dismissed, all in violation of their roles as Municipal Judge and Chief of Police.

Judge James W. Johnson, Jr., presiding judge over the state grand jury, ordered that venue be set in Chesterfield County. A date for arraignment and bond hearing has not been scheduled.

This case was investigated by the State Law Enforcement Division, and will be prosecuted by the Attorney General's Office.

McMaster stressed that all defendants are presumed innocent unless and until they are proven guilty in a court of law.

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