Alaska State Senator John Cowdery, 78, pleaded guilty today to conspiring to bribe another Alaska state legislator, Acting Assistant Attorney General Matthew Friedrich of the Criminal Division announced.

Cowdery admitted to conspiring to offer more than $10,000 in campaign contributions to another Alaska state senator (State Senator A) in exchange for State Senator A's support of oil tax legislation during the 2006 Alaska state legislative session.

Cowdery pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Ralph Beistline in Anchorage to one count of conspiracy to commit bribery concerning programs receiving federal funds. In court documents, Cowdery admitted to conspiring with Bill J. Allen, the former chief executive officer of VECO Corporation (VECO), a now-defunct multinational oil field services company, and Richard L. Smith, a former VECO vice president, to offer at least $10,000 in purported campaign contributions to State Senator A in exchange for State Senator A's support of a proposed petroleum profits tax, or PPT, that VECO wanted the Alaska state legislature to pass in 2006. Cowdery admitted that he and Allen met State Senator A on June 25, 2006, at an Anchorage restaurant to offer State Senator A the bribe. Cowdery admitted that he and Allen specifically conditioned receipt of the bribe, which State Senator A did not accept, on State Senator A's support for the PPT legislation sought by VECO and Allen. Allen and Smith both pleaded guilty to multiple federal corruption charges in May 2007 and both are awaiting sentencing.

At sentencing, Cowdery faces a maximum of five years in prison and a $250,000 fine. As part of a plea agreement with Cowdery, the government has agreed to recommend a sentence of six to 12 months of home confinement. Sentencing has been scheduled for March 10, 2009.

Including Cowdery's guilty plea and those of Allen and Smith, there have been ten criminal convictions to date arising out of the ongoing investigation into public corruption in the state of Alaska. Thomas T. Anderson, a former elected member of the Alaska House of Representatives, was convicted in July 2007 and sentenced to five years in prison for extortion, conspiracy, bribery and money laundering for soliciting and receiving money from an FBI confidential source in exchange for agreeing to perform official acts to further a business interest represented by the source. Peter Kott, a former speaker of the Alaska House of Representatives, was convicted in September 2007 and sentenced to six years in prison for extortion, bribery and conspiracy. Victor H. Kohring, a former elected member of the Alaska House of Representatives, was convicted at trial in November 2007 for attempted extortion, bribery and conspiracy, and was sentenced to three and a half years in prison. In March 2008, James A. Clark, chief of staff to a former governor of Alaska, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit honest services mail and wire fraud. Former Anchorage lobbyist William Bobrick pleaded guilty in May 2007 to felony public corruption charges. U.S. Sen. Theodore F. Stevens was convicted at trial on Oct. 27, 2008, of making false statements regarding his required U.S. Senate financial disclosures for 2001 through 2006. Former Alaska businessman William Weimar was sentenced to six months in prison on Nov. 12, 2008, after pleading guilty on Aug. 12, 2008, to conspiracy to commit honest services mail and wire fraud and structuring financial transactions.

This case is being prosecuted by Trial Attorneys Nicholas A. Marsh and Edward P. Sullivan of

the Criminal Division's Public Integrity Section, headed by Chief William M. Welch II, and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Joseph W. Bottini and James A. Goeke from the District of Alaska. The ongoing investigation is being led by the FBI and the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation.