

Five U.S. lawyers indicted for bribery

by UPI

OXFORD, Miss. -- Four Southern trial attorneys and an employee have been indicted in Mississippi for allegedly offering a \$40,000 bribe to a state court judge. Among them is prominent asbestos and tobacco plaintiffs lawyer Richard "Dickie" Scruggs and his son, Zachary Scruggs, the Wall Street Journal reported. A grand jury in Oxford, Miss., handed down the indictments Wednesday alleging the Scruggs, along with Sidney Backstrom, Timothy Balducci and employee Steven Patterson, made a bribery overture to Judge Henry Lackey. Lackey told federal authorities and agreed to work undercover in the case, which involved his ruling on a lawsuit involving funds for Hurricane Katrina victims on which Scruggs was working. The indictment alleges Balducci paid Lackey \$40,000 to issue a ruling favorable to Scruggs and his law firm. It also alleges Scruggs reimbursed Balducci the money for the bribe, and created false documentation to mask the payment, the Journal said. The newspaper said all of the men either refused to comment or weren't able to be reached.

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