



THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEYS OFFICE
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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

District of Colorado

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Energy Scientist Settles Allegations That He Improperly Double-Billed Government For His Time

DENVER – Dr. Miguel A. Contreras, a senior scientist at the National Renewable Energy Lab located in Golden, Colorado, has paid the United States \$80,000 to settle allegations that he violated the False Claims Act by knowingly double-billing his work-time and submitting false timesheets and false travel reimbursement forms to his employer while he privately consulted for three energy companies.

The National Renewable Energy Lab (“NREL”) is a Department of Energy-owned facility and is managed and operated by The Alliance for Sustainable Energy under contract to the Department of Energy.

According to the Government, Dr. Contreras improperly used his NREL work-time, the work-time of other NREL employees, NREL-owned equipment, and NREL-owned resources for his own personal financial gain while consulting with three private energy companies. The United States found that Dr. Contreras knowingly submitted false timesheets and travel reimbursement claims to fraudulently “double-bill” his time without seeking the proper approvals from his NREL supervisors. This conduct occurred on numerous occasions during 2008 through 2009.

In the settlement agreement, Dr. Contreras acknowledges that had this matter gone to trial, the United States would be able to prove these facts by a preponderance of the evidence.

The government further asserted that Dr. Contreras also misled his supervisors and investigators about the nature of his private consulting work. As a result of these acts, the United States claimed that Dr. Contreras committed up to thirty-seven separate violations of the False Claims Act.

This matter was investigated by the Department of Energy's Office of the Inspector General, in conjunction with the United States Attorney's Office, District of Colorado.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jacob Licht-Steenfat and Chris Larson handled this matter on behalf of the government.

USAO - Colorado

Topic:

Financial Fraud

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