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## State fines Harutunian \$6,000

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The Massachusetts State Ethics Commission today fined former North Andover Superintendent Harry K. Harutunian \$6,000 for violating the state's conflict of interest law, by improperly creating a part-time custodial job for the son of his girlfriend, directing school custodians to transport the son to and from work and covering up his actions to create the job.

According to the disposition agreement, in fall 2005, a School Department employee became Harutunian's girlfriend. Her son attended North Andover High School. Harutunian, who was married, created a position for his girlfriend's son as a part-time, after-school janitor at the middle school. The position paid \$10.50 per hour; the son earned a total of \$540 during the 2005-06 school year. Harutunian instructed custodians to pick up the son at the high school, transport him to the middle school to work and drop him at his home after work.

In addition, Harutunian instructed a career counselor at the high school to fabricate and backdate a memo requesting that Harutunian find his girlfriend's son a job.

The law prohibits a public employee from using or attempting to use his position to secure for himself or others an unwarranted privilege of substantial value not properly available to similarly situated individuals. By creating the job, directing School Department employees to provide transportation and by covering up his involvement in the creation and hiring of his girlfriend's son, Harutunian used his superintendent position to get his girlfriend's son an unwarranted privilege of substantial value, according to the Ethics Commission.

"The superintendent of schools holds a significant position of trust in the community to help care for and educate all of its children," said commission Executive Director Peter Sturges. "Using that position to provide his girlfriend's son with a special deal not available to other students and then trying to cover up his actions is a deplorable violation of that trust."

Harutunian resigned in April after he publicly acknowledged having an affair with secretary and gymnastics coach Brenda Shea. He volunteered to take vacation time after a private investigator was hired by the School Committee to look into whether the two were romantically involved last summer when he gave her a 29 percent raise.

The School Committee accepted his resignation in exchange for a settlement of \$187,000, on the grounds that it was best for the students and the school district. Harutunian, who was hired in 2003, was earning \$163,000 a year after a pay raise last year. Had he been fired, he could have fought to have the School Committee buy out the remaining four years of his contract, estimated at more than \$600,000. Instead, he received 14.5 months of his salary.

As part of the agreement, the School Committee agreed it would not comment about any of the specific incidents that led to the settlement, citing "personnel matters, which are protected by privacy rights."

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