

## News

# DECODING FEDERAL BRIBERY LAW: THE SNYDER CASE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR CORRUPTION PROSECUTIONS

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BCLP Partner Saurish Appleby-Bhattacharjee was quoted in [Law360](#) regarding a U.S. Supreme Court case revolving around the interpretation of federal bribery law, particularly whether the law criminalizes gratuities (rewards given to a public official after they've taken official action) without requiring proof of a quid pro quo arrangement beforehand.

In 2021, James Snyder, former mayor of Portage, Indiana, was convicted and sentenced to 21 months in prison for accepting a \$13,000 payment from a garbage truck company after directing contacts its way.

The Seventh Circuit's ruling in *U.S. v. James Snyder* affirmed that the federal bribery statute encompasses gratuities, a stance also followed by four other circuits. However, there is a circuit split, with the First and Fifth Circuits adopting a narrower interpretation similar to Snyder's view.

If the Supreme Court sides with Snyder, it could raise the bar for prosecutors by requiring a higher standard of proving quid pro quo in bribery cases. This may affect ongoing cases, including that of former Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan and questions the extent to which federal prosecutors should intervene in state and local matters related to good governance.

"The tension between what is best handled at the state or federal level could be a key reason why the high court has taken up the Snyder case, beyond the need to offer guidance amid a circuit split," said Saurish. "One of the strongest things that Snyder's counsel did to get the Supreme Court's attention was to tap into its recently reinvigorated federalism. In invoking federalism, Snyder may have used the magic word," he added.

Saurish is a former federal prosecutor in Chicago and Los Angeles, is a seasoned trial attorney who has extensive experience litigating high-stakes matters in federal and state court, to include civil and criminal litigation, white-collar matters, and internal investigations.

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### **Saurish Appleby-Bhattacharjee**

Chicago / Los Angeles

[saurish.applebybhattacharjee@bc](mailto:saurish.applebybhattacharjee@bclplaw.com)

[lplaw.com](http://lplaw.com)

[+1 312 602 5004](tel:+13126025004)

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