

## Conservative fund-raiser gets prison for tax evasion

By TERESA WIPPEL KUNZL

SEATTLE -- A federal judge sentenced conservative fund-raiser Alan Gottlieb to a year and a day in prison Thursday for income tax evasion and said the term was a 'message' to other potential tax cheats.

Gottlieb, 36, Bellevue, Wash., the operator of several campaign, lobbying and direct-mail fund-raising organizations for conservative causes, had pleaded guilty to one count of filing a false federal income tax return.

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U.S. District Judge John Coughenour, who ordered him to spend one year and one day in prison and pay a \$1,000 fine, said the sentence was designed to send a message to other potential tax cheaters.

'The message that should be delivered to those who take the chance is that the risk is great, the price to be paid if caught is severe,' the judge said.

Gottlieb, who hugged his crying wife after the sentence was pronounced, told reporters he thought he was being used as an example.

He also distributed a statement attacking the Internal Revenue Service for exerting undue pressure on the court and claimed his indictment was part of a Treasury Department campaign against pro-gun groups.

He was indicted by a federal grand jury on charges of filing false income tax returns in 1977 and 1978 by failing to include gross receipts of \$138,000 and \$260,000 those two years from Merril Associates, his political fund-raising firm.

The government said he reported taxable income of \$13,334 for 1977, when he actually made \$44,500, and reported \$17,328 for 1978, when he made \$76,500.

Gottlieb entered a plea of guilty to the charges for 1977 and the government dropped the indictment for 1978.

The U.S. Attorney's office recommended a prison sentence, while defense attorney Larry Hard urged leniency because Gottlieb is 'a good and decent person' who had already suffered for what he had done.

'Putting Alan in jail will not make him more sorry or more humiliated than he already is,' said Hard, who suggested Gottlieb serve his sentence in a halfway house or some other way that would allow him to remain in the community.

Gottlieb is executive director of the Second Amendment Foundation, Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms, and the Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise. Merrill Associates has managed the political campaigns of several conservative candidates in the Northwest in recent years.

After the court appearance, Gottlieb issued a statement saying 'compelling family and personal reasons' prevented him from fully defending himself against the charges.'

He said he and his wife had their second daughter in late March and wanted to get the tax charges behind them so they could return to a normal family life.