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HUD secretary's blunt warning

Alphonso Jackson says deal was scuttled after contractor admits not liking Bush

Dallas Business Journal - May 5, 2006 by [Christine Perez](#) Staff Writer

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Once the color barrier has been broken, minority contractors seeking government work may need to overcome the Bush barrier.

That's the message [U.S. Housing and Urban Development](#) Secretary Alphonso Jackson seemed to send during an April 28 talk in Dallas.

Jackson, a former president and CEO of the [Dallas Housing Authority](#), was among the featured speakers at a forum sponsored by the Real Estate Executive Council, a national minority real estate consortium.

After discussing the huge strides the agency has made in doing business with minority-owned companies, Jackson closed with a cautionary tale, relaying a conversation he had with a prospective advertising contractor.

"He had made every effort to get a contract with HUD for 10 years," Jackson said of the prospective contractor. "He made a heck of a proposal and was on the (General Services Administration) list, so we selected him. He came to see me and thank me for selecting him. Then he said something ... he said, 'I have a problem with your president.'"

"I said, 'What do you mean?' He said, 'I don't like President Bush.' I thought to myself, 'Brother, you have a disconnect -- the president is elected, I was selected. You wouldn't be getting the

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contract unless I was sitting here. If you have a problem with the president, don't tell the secretary.'

"He didn't get the contract," Jackson continued. "Why should I reward someone who doesn't like the president, so they can use funds to try to campaign against the president? Logic says they don't get the contract. That's the way I believe."

Cal Jillson, a political science professor at Southern Methodist University, said canceling a government contract due to political views "is not a door you want to open."

"Whether or not it's legal, it certainly draws your judgment and the judgment of your

office into question," Jillson said. "It's just not the tone you want to set."

Told of Jackson's comments, Mary Scott Nabers, a government-contracting consultant in Austin, had a briefer initial reaction. "Oh, my goodness gracious," she said.

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