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Federal prosecutors allege state Rep. Tom Anderson, R-Anchorage had his hand out looking for bribes. Some who follow the private prisons industry say it's a fairly good place to look.

Last week in Colorado, the state's former corrections chief was accused of starting work for private prison firm, GEO Group, before he left his state job and earning a fee for siting a new prison. GEO Group was formerly known as Wackenhut.

In Florida, the state prisons director pleaded guilty to taking kickbacks from a subcontractor. He lost his job earlier this year.

While the industry has been promising states big savings by taking their jails, prisons and treatment centers private, it has also been beset by allegations that it has had to use questionable financial deals, and in some cases bribes, to win contracts.

Federal investigators say Anderson solicited bribes from a lobbyist who represented private prisons.

Brad Wilson of the Alaska Correctional Officers Association, a union representing state prison officers, was not surprised.

"This is indicative of the industry," he said.

When Alaska was considering proposals from Cornell Companies and Veco Corp. to build a private prison, Wilson spent years traveling the state warning of the downsides of turning over control of prisons to private companies.

"Private prisons are an abomination to corrections officers," he said.

"It's pretty much throughout the entire industry," said Brian Dawe, executive director of the American Correctional Officer, a private group representing corrections professionals.

Publicly operated prisons are motivated by community safety, prisoner rehabilitation, and other factors established by elected officials, he said.

Private prisons' top goal is cost-cutting to improve profits, he said.

Alaska looked closely at constructing a private prison in 2004, when Cornell and the politically connected Veco Corp. had a proposal to build prisons in Whittier and elsewhere.

The state has since decided that publicly owned prisons are superior and is looking to build its new prison in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, said Richard Schmitz, spokesman for the Department of Corrections.