

Suffolk Sheriff Tompkins seeks to dismiss seized emails in US extortion case

By [Laura Crimaldi](#) Globe Staff, Updated December 10, 2025, 3:21 p.m.



Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins (center) stood with his lawyer, Martin G. Weinberg (left), after he pleaded not guilty to extortion charges in August. PAT GREENHOUSE/GLOBE STAFF

A lawyer for [Suffolk Sheriff Steve W. Tompkins](#) asked a federal judge Wednesday to throw out years of his client's emails seized by federal agents who investigated him for alleged extortion.

The request is the latest by Tompkins to challenge what federal prosecutors say is evidence that he [extorted a cannabis company](#) by threatening to revoke a partnership with his office that was central to [the business's licensing application](#).

Tompkins has pleaded not guilty. He is on leave from his role as sheriff, an elected position, and sat with his defense lawyer during a 30-minute hearing on Wednesday in US District Court in Boston.

Tompkins has been fighting for his freedom and political future on different fronts.

Last week, he established a legal defense fund with the state Office of Campaign and Political Finance, records show.

Candidates are permitted to create such funds to pay for expenses related to defending criminal charges. The accounts are not subject to contribution limits imposed on other political committees.

In November, US District Court Judge Myong J. Joun [heard arguments](#) on a request by Tompkins to dismiss the case against him.

Joun has yet to rule on that request, and now he is also considering Tompkins's challenge to the search warrants that gave investigators access to years of personal emails he sent through Google and Comcast.

Attorney Martin G. Weinberg, who represents Tompkins, said the search warrants violated his client's constitutional protections against unreasonable government searches because they were too broad, authorizing investigators complete access to two personal email accounts.

The warrants also permitted investigators to search emails that are not related to the alleged extortion scheme, Weinberg said.

"That is not allowed," he said.

Assistant US Attorney John Mulcahy said the searches weren't overly broad. They had connections to actions by Tompkins in his role as sheriff that were "extortionate in nature," he said.

"There's probable cause for the government to seize those communications," Mulcahy said.

The two-count indictment filed against Tompkins in August alleges he used his position as sheriff to extort a cannabis company twice — once for early access to purchase \$50,000 in the company's stock, and later to get his money back after the stock value tanked.

The company has been identified as [Ascend Mass](#), which is part of a larger retailer with operations in other states.

In Massachusetts, cannabis companies applying for annual licenses must demonstrate their businesses will have a "positive impact," especially on communities adversely affected by the nation's war on drugs. Ascend met that requirement by partnering with Tompkins on a program to train and hire people recently released from jail, federal prosecutors allege.

Tompkins is accused of leveraging that partnership by exploiting the company's concerns that, without his cooperation, state regulators would not renew its license to operate a shop downtown.

Tompkins, a Democrat from Hyde Park, has served as sheriff since 2013, overseeing the Nashua Street and South Bay jails in Boston and other detention operations in Suffolk County.

He has kept his job as sheriff while on leave. A conviction could jeopardize his pension, and a jail or prison sentence would remove him from the post, which pays \$191,000 annually.

Laura Crimaldi can be reached at laura.crimaldi@globe.com. Follow her [@lauracrimaldi](#).

[Show comments](#)

©2025 Boston Globe Media Partners, LLC