

## News Release

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### **BIG BUCKS BINGO OPERATORS SENTENCED FOR CONSPIRACY TO DEFRAUD THE IRS**

William J. Tway and Robert J. Ford were sentenced today in federal court in Boise for conspiracy to defraud the Internal Revenue Service through their operation of Big Bucks Bingo in Garden City.

U.S. District Judge Robert J. Timlin sentenced each man to six months of incarceration followed by nine months of home detention. He also ordered each of them to pay a fine of \$30,000.

In sentencing Ford and Tway, Judge Timlin called their activities "an elaborate and prolonged scheme designed to generate substantial income" for them, and said they had "undermined the functions of government" by defrauding the IRS.

Ford and Tway ran Big Bucks Bingo starting in 1996 under a provision in the state constitution that permits bingo and raffle games operated by qualified charitable organizations. A related state law requires that at least 20 percent of the annual gross revenues of the games must be given to charitable or nonprofit organizations to be used for charitable purposes.

In April of this year, Ford and Tway were found guilty of conspiring to file false returns with the IRS, substantially overstating the amount of monies that were actually given to charity. Tway was also convicted of aiding and abetting the filing of false returns in 1999 and 2000 for the Free Speech Foundation, one of the charitable or non-profit entities that operated Big Bucks Bingo.

"Today's sentencing demonstrates that those who willfully attempt to undermine our tax system by playing fast and loose with the rules will be held accountable regardless of how complicated a scheme they devise," said Paul Camacho, the acting IRS Special Agent in Charge for Idaho.

"The Idaho Constitution makes it clear that bingo is only authorized when it substantially benefits a charitable organization, not just its operators," said First Assistant United States Attorney Marc Haws, "and the Idaho Legislature has acted to give specific meaning to that provision. The sentences imposed today should send a clear message to others that the law and the Constitution will be enforced."