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News Release

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Former Minnesota District Court Clerk sentenced for fraud in performing his job

MINNEAPOLIS – Yesterday in federal court in St. Paul, a former senior clerk of court for the State of Minnesota's Fourth Judicial District was sentenced for failing to provide the state and its citizens honest services by improperly dismissing traffic citations and pocketing associated funds. United States District Court Judge Donovan W. Frank sentenced Abdulkadir Mohamoud Afrah, age 43, of Hastings, to 21 months in prison on one count of honest services wire fraud. In addition, Afrah was ordered to pay \$6,110 in restitution. Afrah was indicted on February 22, 2011, and pleaded guilty on March 21, 2011.

Afrah began working for the State of Minnesota in March of 2003. In his plea agreement, he admitted that from 2008 through 2011, he unlawfully dismissed at least 22 "no proof of car insurance" tickets. Those tickets had a value to Hennepin County District Court of at least \$6,110. Afrah also admitted that he had sought bribes and received other payments from cited persons in the course of dismissing the tickets. To hide this scheme from his employer, Afrah admitted making false entries in the court's computer system.

In his professional capacity, Afrah reviewed and processed traffic citations at the Violations Bureau in the Hennepin County Government Center. Specifically, he handled "no proof of insurance" citations brought to him by members of the public. If presented with such a citation as well as an insurance card, Afrah had the authority to dismiss the ticket if the insurance company named on the card confirmed that a policy was in force at the time the citation was issued. In order to dismiss the ticket, Afrah was required to enter information, including the policy number from the applicable insurance card, into the court's computer system.

A law enforcement affidavit filed in the case states that in March of 2010, authorities learned that Afrah was fixing tickets for people cited for no proof of insurance. On January 10, 2011, a cooperating witness who was issued such a citation met with Afrah, asking for his help

because he purportedly had no insurance. Afrah told the man he could help him in exchange for \$278, which equaled the fine amount. Afrah met with the cooperating witness again later in the day, walking with him to a nearby building, where Afrah accepted \$280 in cash. Afrah then told the cooperating witness that the citation would not go on his record. The court's electronic records indicate that Afrah dismissed the ticket at 4:10 p.m. that day. On January 19, 2011, the cooperating witness returned to the Violations Bureau, met with Afrah, and received a receipt that showed the citation had been dismissed.

This case was the result of an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, with assistance of the Fourth Judicial District. It was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Tracy L. Perzel.

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