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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, March 21, 2011
WWW.JUSTICE.GOV/USAO/MN

Former Minnesota District Court Clerk pleads guilty to fraud in performing his job

Earlier today in federal court in St. Paul, a former senior clerk of court for the State of Minnesota's Fourth Judicial District pleaded guilty to failing to provide the state and its citizens honest services by improperly dismissing traffic citations and pocketing associated funds. Abdulkadir Mohamoud Afrah, age 43, of Hastings, pleaded guilty to one count of honest services wire fraud. Afrah, who was indicted on February 22, 2011, entered his plea before United States District Court Judge Donovan W. Frank.

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 \$6110.00. 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 that he had made 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 was 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.

Afrah faces a potential maximum penalty of 20 years in federal prison for his crime. Judge Frank will determine his sentence at a future hearing, yet to be scheduled.

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

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