



*United States Attorney
Southern District of New York*

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GUILTY VERDICT IN FAKE INVOICE MASS-MAILING SCAM

LEV L. DASSIN, the Acting United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that, following a seven-day jury trial, MICHAEL SCHLUSSEL was found guilty this afternoon on charges arising out of a scheme in which he tricked a large number of companies into paying sums they did not owe by mass-mailing invoice-style solicitations for fluorescent light bulbs to thousands of companies across the country.

According to the evidence set forth at trial:

SCHLUSSEL operated a collections agency called "Alden Curtis and Michaels, Ltd." He was aware that, due to the volume of invoices processed by most businesses, businesses sometimes will pay invoices without verifying that the goods were actually delivered, especially in situations where the invoice is for less than \$1,000. SCHLUSSEL took advantage of this by mass-mailing thousands of solicitations for fluorescent light bulbs. The solicitations were styled to appear as invoices, in the amount of \$995. SCHLUSSEL established several shell companies to mail the invoice-style solicitations, providing as return addresses mailboxes at commercial mail receiving agencies. To avoid using a mail meter that could be traced, SCHLUSSEL sent the mass mailings with individual stamps. To conceal the disposition of funds paid on the fake invoice/solicitations, the checks were double-endorsed and deposited into the Alden Curtis and Michaels account. Over 100 companies that sent checks in response to the invoice-style solicitations confirmed that they did not order light bulbs. Several additional companies, the checks of which were cashed, also confirmed that they never received light bulbs after the fact. In total, companies have sent at least \$700,000 worth of checks as a result of the fraud.

SCHLUSSEL, 57, of Rego Park, New York, was found guilty of one count of conspiracy to commit mail fraud and one count of mail fraud. He faces a maximum prison term of twenty years and a maximum fine of the greater of \$250,000 or twice the gross

pecuniary gain or loss resulting from the crime on each count. SCHLUSSEL must pay restitution to the victims of his crime.

Sentencing is scheduled for July 21, 2009, at 10:00 a.m. before United States District Judge JOHN F. KEENAN.

Mr. DASSIN praised the work of the United States Postal Inspection Service.

This case is being handled by the Office's Major Crimes Unit. Assistant United States Attorneys WILLIAM J. HARRINGTON and JULIAN J. MOORE are in charge of the prosecution.

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