



U. S. Department of Justice

Carlie Christensen

**United States Attorney
District of Utah**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Aug. 23, 2011**

CONTACT: MELODIE RYDALCH
U.S. Attorney's Office
801-325-3206
801-243-6475 (cell)

PRESS RELEASE
***UTAH COUNTY MAN PLEADS GUILTY
IN CONNECTION WITH MORTGAGE FRAUD
SCHEME INVOLVING HIGHLAND HOME***

SALT LAKE CITY – James Andrew Lawyer, age 30, a resident of Utah County, will be sentenced Oct. 26, 2011, in U.S. District Court in Salt Lake City after pleading guilty Thursday to conspiracy in connection with a mortgage fraud scheme involving the purchase of a home in Highland, Utah.

In court documents, Lawyer admitted he conspired with an individual identified as B.G. and at least one other person to commit wire fraud or money laundering or both offenses.

In a plea agreement reached with federal prosecutors, Lawyer admitted that he was approached by B.G. to use his name to purchase a residence at 5843 W. Avonmore in Highland. Lawyer said B.G. told him on several occasions that he would receive approximately \$250,000 at the time of closing as compensation.

Lawyer admitted that at the time he closed on the property, he knew that the original sellers of the property had sold it for substantially less than

\$975,000. According to the Felony Information, a co-conspirator in the case had offered to purchase the home for \$680,000.

Despite knowing that, Lawyer applied for two residential loans totaling \$975,000 to purchase the property and proceeded to closing. On the loan applications, which Lawyer signed, he represented that the sales price of the property was \$975,000. On Sept. 13, 2006, two wire transfers funding these loans were sent from New York to Utah.

Lawyer admitted that as a result of the loans he obtained and the property he purchased, \$295,000 was transferred by the title company as a "JVA pmt. to Portia, Inc." According to the plea agreement, B.G. transferred \$247,000 of this amount to Lawyer's bank account on Sept. 15, 2006.

As a part of the plea agreement, federal prosecutors agreed not to file additional criminal charges relative to Lawyer's activities with other properties in Pleasant Grove and Heber City. However, Lawyer stipulated that for sentencing and restitution purposes, the final loss amount in his case will include losses from his loans on those properties.

Lawyer faces up to five years in prison and a fine of \$250,000 for the conspiracy conviction when he is sentenced in October. The case is being investigated by IRS Criminal Investigation and FBI special agents.

###