



Department of Justice

Robert M. Duncan, Jr.
United States Attorney
Eastern District of Kentucky

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CONTACT: WM. ALLEN LOVE
PHONE: (859) 685-4805
E-MAIL: William.Allen.Love@usdoj.gov

One Convicted And Two Sentenced As Part Of U.S. Attorney's Elder Justice Initiative

LEXINGTON, Ky. – John Jerome O'Hara, of Lexington, Paul Anthony Long, II, of Lexington, and Mitzi Shawn Sears, of Nancy, Kentucky all appeared in federal court today on charges related to elder financial exploitation.

O'Hara and Long both previously pleaded guilty to fraud charges related to the theft of funds from relatives. According to his plea agreement, O'Hara used his Power of Attorney over his mother's finances to obtain money for his personal benefit, while at the same time failing to pay his mother's living expenses at her nursing home. Court documents indicate that while O'Hara's mother suffered from dementia, he took over \$330,000 from her accounts for his personal benefit. Judge Danny C. Reeves sentenced O'Hara to 26 months in prison and was ordered to pay \$332,149.95 in restitution. Upon release from prison, O'Hara will be on supervised release for five years.

According to Long's plea agreement, he too abused his Power of Attorney, over his grandfather's finances, to spend his grandfather's money for his own benefit. Court documents indicate that Long's grandfather suffered from severe Alzheimer's Disease and was a resident of Thomson Hood Veterans Center in Wilmore, Kentucky. From 2011 until his grandfather's death in 2015, Long took over \$600,000 from his grandfather. Neither his grandfather nor the Power of Attorney authorized any of those expenditures. Judge Danny C. Reeves sentenced Long to 42 months in prison and Long was ordered to pay \$608,395 in restitution. Upon release from prison, Long will be on supervised release for five years.

In London, Kentucky, Mitzi Shawn Sears pleaded guilty to financial institution fraud. According to her plea agreement, Sears convinced a victim identified as “M.N.” to buy property in Pulaski County with her, as an investment, and then to pay legal fees associated with a fictitious lawsuit concerning that real property. She impersonated real people, in emails and phone calls to M.N., in efforts to convince M.N. that the expenses associated with the property and the lawsuit were legitimate. Sears also admitted to forging 16 checks belonging to M.N., and cashing them or negotiating them for her own benefit. In total, Sears obtained \$455,977.00 from various bank accounts belonging to M.N., for her personal benefit. Further, Sears admitted she lured M.N. into applying for a \$40,000 business loan to cover expenses for the property, in order to obtain even more money.

Sears faces up to 30 years in prison, a fine of \$1,000,000, and five years of supervised release for her offense. She has agreed to forfeit the property she purchased with the money taken from M.N. She is scheduled to be sentenced by Judge Robert E. Wier on September 9, 2019.

All three cases highlight efforts by the Department of Justice and federal and state investigative agencies to combat elder financial exploitation. “The Department, and our Office, work in partnership with other law enforcement agencies to hold accountable those individuals that victimize elderly citizens,” said United States Attorney Robert M. Duncan, Jr. “These prosecutions underscore our commitment to seeking justice on behalf of this vulnerable population.”

An example of cooperation among law enforcement agencies is the Kentucky Elder Justice Task Force, which brings together the resources of federal, state, and local agencies involved in protecting the elderly. For more information on the Kentucky Elder Justice Task Force, including how to report abuses, please visit: <https://www.justice.gov/usao-edky/elder-justice-task-force.>”]

Robert M. Duncan, Jr., United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Kentucky, announced the sentences and the conviction. Resident Agent in Charge, Jon Oldham, United States Secret Service, and Chief of Police Lawrence Weathers, Lexington Police Department, join in the announcement of the sentence of O’Hara. Special Agent in Charge James Robert Brown, Federal Bureau of Investigation, joins in the announcement of the sentence of Long. FBI Special Agent in Charge Brown and Commissioner Richard W. Sanders, Kentucky State Police, join in the announcement of the conviction of Sears.

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