



Department of Justice

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Frankfort Woman Pleads Guilty to Money Laundering and Filing False Tax Return

Defendant was laundering hundreds of thousands of dollars she had stolen, from the Franklin County Board of Education

FRANKFORT, Ky. - A Frankfort woman, Lesley Wade, pled guilty in federal court on Tuesday, before U.S. District Judge Gregory Van Tatenhove, to money laundering and filing a materially false tax return.

Wade was a long time employee of the Franklin County Board of Education (FCBOE), most recently serving as the FCBOE's Financial Director. In Wade's guilty plea agreement, she admitted that, starting in February 2011 and continuing through about June 25, 2019, she wrote unauthorized checks of FCBOE money to herself, then falsified the necessary FCBOE records and invoices to cover up her crimes.

Wade also served as Treasurer of Leestown Gospel Church in Frankfort, where she essentially had plenary control over its financial management, with little oversight or internal controls. Wade also admitted to periodically using her control over the Church's finances to launder money she had stolen from the FCBOE, using the Church's account before writing checks to herself, attempting to avoid detection and making the checks appear legitimate.

Her theft of funds, which took place over a term of years, resulted in the FCBOE losing a total of \$1,624,593. Further hiding her theft of funds, Wade also admitted that she willfully filed false individual income tax returns, for the years 2011-2018, by intentionally failing to report the income from her fraudulent scheme. The total amount of tax loss is \$315,677.

Robert M. Duncan, Jr., United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Kentucky; James Robert Brown, Jr., Special Agent in Charge for the Louisville Division of FBI; and Bryant Jackson, Special Agent in Charge, Internal Revenue Service – Criminal Investigation; jointly announced the guilty plea.

The investigation was conducted by the FBI and IRS. The United States was represented by Special Assistant U.S. Attorney James Chapman.

Wade is scheduled to be sentenced on September 17, 2020. For the money laundering

charge, she faces up to 20 years in prison and a maximum fine of \$500,000. For the tax charge, she faces up to three years in prison and a maximum fine of \$250,000. However, any sentence will be imposed by the Court after consideration of the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and the federal sentencing statutes.

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