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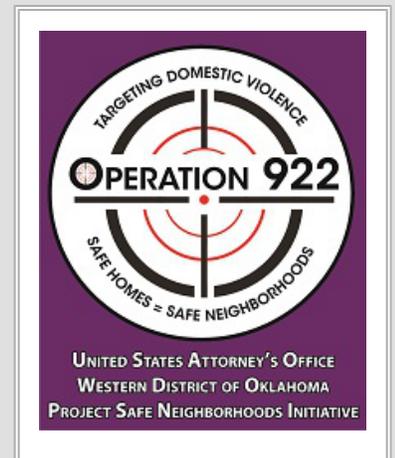
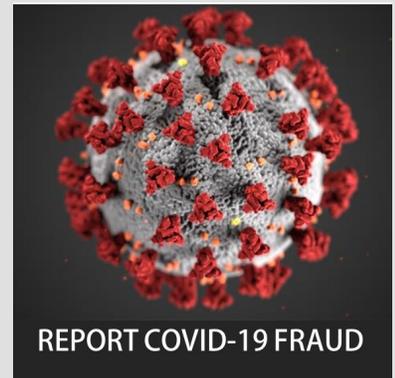
Thursday, January 4, 2018

Former Oklahoma Beef Council Employee Sentenced to 57 Months for \$2.68 Million Embezzlement and Signing a False Tax Return

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma – **MELISSA DAY MORTON**, of Edmond, Oklahoma, was sentenced today to 57 months in federal prison for bank fraud and signing a false federal income tax return, in connection with a \$2.68 million embezzlement from the Oklahoma Beef Council, announced Mark A. Yancey, United States Attorney for the Western District of Oklahoma.

On May 24, 2017, Morton pleaded guilty to an Information charging her with one count of bank fraud and one count of filing a false federal income tax return. From October 1995 until late July 2016, Morton worked as the Accounting and Compliance Manager at the Oklahoma Beef Council in Oklahoma City. As part of her job, Morton prepared checks, paid invoices, and generated financial statements for audits. Morton pleaded guilty to preparing an unauthorized company check, in the amount of \$5,652.25, made payable to herself in February 2016. At the plea hearing, Morton admitted she forged the signature of the Beef Council's executive director on the check and later presented that check for payment against the Beef Council's bank account at a local bank. She further admitted she embezzled funds from her former employer from around 2009 through 2016 and stipulated that the total loss to the Beef Council was \$2,681,400.73.

At the plea hearing in May 2017, Morton also pleaded guilty to signing a false tax return. She admitted that on October 12, 2015, she signed a personal federal tax return for the 2014 calendar year that she knew was false because it reported only \$183,545 in total income. At the plea hearing, Morton admitted she omitted on the 2014 return more than \$388,000 of embezzled income for that year from the Beef



Council.

Today, United States District Judge Vicki Miles-LaGrange sentenced Morton to 57 months in federal prison, followed by five years of supervised release. In addition, Morton was ordered to pay restitution of \$2,317,526.32 to the Beef Council and \$110,000 to an insurance company that provided coverage to the Beef Council. Judge Miles-LaGrange also ordered Morton to pay \$617,044 in restitution to the Internal Revenue Service for taxes owed from not reporting the embezzlement income on her federal tax returns for calendar years 2010 through 2015. Before sentencing, Morton had made restitution payments totaling \$253,874.41 to the Beef Council. Morton must report to the Federal Bureau of Prisons on February 5, 2018.

This case was the result of an investigation by the United States Secret Service, the Internal Revenue Service—Criminal Investigations, and the United States Department of Agriculture—Office of Inspector General. Assistant U.S. Attorney Chris M. Stephens prosecuted the case.

Topic(s):

Financial Fraud
Tax

Component(s):

USAO - Oklahoma, Western

Updated January 5, 2018



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