

NEWS RELEASE

Luther Strange

Alabama Attorney General



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AG ANNOUNCES CONVICTION OF FORMER MUNICIPAL COURT CLERK FOR FIRST-DEGREE THEFT FROM SPANISH FORT COURT FUNDS

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Luther Strange announced the conviction of a former municipal court clerk for first-degree theft of funds from the Spanish Fort Municipal Court. Mary Luft, 41, of Daphne, was found guilty on September 13 following a trial that began the day before in Baldwin County Circuit Court. The jury deliberated for less than an hour before returning the guilty verdict.

“This defendant held a position of public trust in which her duty was to be a caretaker of municipal court funds,” said Attorney General Strange. “She betrayed that trust by stealing the people’s money, and now she will be held to account and punished for her crime. I am proud of the hard work and outstanding commitment by the staff of our Investigations Division and Public Corruption and White Collar Crime Division to deliver justice for the people of Alabama.”

As municipal court clerk, Luft was responsible for handling and processing all money that came through the municipal court of Spanish Fort. The Attorney General’s Office presented evidence that Luft skimmed and stole more than \$58,000, which was nearly half of the money that came into the municipal court over a 14-month period spanning 2006 and 2007. At trial the Attorney General’s Office also presented an audit performed by the Alabama Department of Public Examiners, which uncovered the missing funds with a chargeback holding Luft responsible. Among the testimony and voluminous documents presented as evidence was the testimony of an Examiners auditor who detailed the scheme used by Luft to embezzle more than \$58,000 of city and state funds. The money stolen belonged to the state as well as the city because a portion of the court fines are distributed to the State and counties.

Sentencing is set for October 31. Luft faces a potential penalty of two to 20 years and a fine of up to \$30,000 for the class B felony.

Attorney General Strange commended those involved in bringing this case to a successful conclusion, noting in particular his Investigations Division and Assistant Attorneys General Thomas Govan and Pete Smyczek of the Attorney General’s Public Corruption and White Collar Crime Division. He also thanked the Examiners of Public Accounts and in particular Whitney Atchison.

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