



AG ANNOUNCES ARREST FOR MULTIPLE COUNTS OF HOME MORTGAGE FRAUD AND FIRST-DEGREE THEFT

(MONTGOMERY)--Attorney General Luther Strange announced the arrest yesterday of a Prattville woman for four counts of residential mortgage fraud, two counts of first-degree theft and two counts of first degree theft by deception. Lynda Branch, 59, formerly operated Professional Closing and Title LLC, doing business in Prattville as Pro Close. Branch was arrested by the Autauga County Sheriff's Office.

Attorney General Strange's Office presented evidence to an Autauga County grand jury on May 8, resulting in Branch's indictment on May 10. Specifically, the indictment charges:

- One count of residential mortgage fraud in that Branch, knowingly and with intent to defraud made a material deliberate misrepresentation, by certifying in a HUD-1 Settlement Statement that Professional Closing and Title would disburse \$140,325 to GMAC to pay off first and second mortgages on behalf of a consumer, with intent that this misrepresentation made during the mortgage lending process would be relied upon by the Wells Fargo N.A., in violation of Code of Alabama Section 13A-9-130;
- One count of residential mortgage fraud in that Branch, knowingly and with intent to defraud made a material deliberate misrepresentation, by certifying in a HUD-1 Settlement Statement that Professional Closing and Title would disburse \$140,325 to GMAC to pay off first and second mortgages on behalf of a consumer, with intent that this misrepresentation made during the mortgage lending process would be relied upon by consumers, in violation of Code of Alabama Section 13A-9-130;
- One count of residential mortgage fraud in that Branch, knowingly and with intent to defraud made a material deliberate misrepresentation, by certifying in a HUD-1 Settlement Statement that professional Closing and Title would disburse \$273,399 to USAA to pay off a first mortgage on behalf of a consumer, with intent that the misrepresentation made during the mortgage lending process would be relied upon by Wells Fargo N.A., in violation of Code of Alabama Section 13A-9-130;

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- One count of residential mortgage fraud in that Branch, knowingly and with intent to defraud made a material deliberate misrepresentation, by certifying in a HUD-1 Settlement Statement that professional Closing and Title would disburse \$273,399 to USAA to pay off a first mortgage on behalf of a consumer, with intent that the misrepresentation made during the mortgage lending process would be relied upon by consumers, in violation of Code of Alabama Section 13A-9-130;
- Two counts of first-degree theft by unauthorized control, of property valued at more than \$2,500 from Wells Fargo Bank N.A., in violation of Code of Alabama Section 13A-8-3; and
- Two counts of first-degree theft by deception, of property valued at more than \$2,500 from Wells Fargo Bank N.A., in violation of Code of Alabama Section 13A-8-3.

No further information about the investigation or about Branch's alleged crimes other than that stated in the indictment may be released at this time.

If convicted, Branch faces a maximum penalty of two to 20 years imprisonment and fines of up to \$30,000 for each of the four counts of first-degree theft, which are class B felonies. For each of the four counts of home mortgage fraud, which are class C felonies, she faces penalties of one to ten years imprisonment and fines of up to \$15,000.

The case was investigated by Special Agents of the Attorney General's Office with assistance from the Prattville Police Department, and is being prosecuted by Assistant Attorney General Stephanie Billingslea of the Attorney General's Criminal Trials Division.

**An indictment is merely an accusation. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.*