

NEWS RELEASE

Luther Strange

Alabama Attorney General



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AG STRANGE ANNOUNCES CONVICTION OF FORMER OZARK SCHOOL FINANCIAL OFFICER FOR FELONY ETHICS VIOLATIONS

COMMENDS PUBLIC CORRUPTION AND WHITE COLLAR CRIME DIVISION

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Luther Strange announced the conviction of a former chief financial officer for the Ozark City Board of Education on two felony counts involving public funds. Monica Baker Foote, 53, of Ozark, pleaded guilty on February 22 in the Dale County Circuit Court.

Foote pleaded guilty to one count of intentionally using her official position for unlawful personal gain of money or checks and one count of first-degree theft of property from the Ozark City School Board in money or checks valued at more than \$2,500. Both offenses are Class B felonies and carry a range of two to 20 years incarceration and fines up to \$30,000 for each count. The Attorney General's Office is requesting that Foote be ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$102,170. Sentencing will be at a later date.

The Attorney General's office presented evidence to a Dale County grand jury on January 7, resulting in Foote's indictment and subsequently in this conviction.

School board officials became concerned because of the appearance of numerous school board checks made payable to Foote. The Examiners of Public Accounts conducted a consequent audit of the Ozark City Board of Education. From the audit, examiners concluded Foote had embezzled approximately \$97,000 from the school board and an additional \$5,364.81 in false travel claims from the State of Alabama. Evidence indicated that Foote, a public employee, was issuing checks from official funds to herself and then depositing those funds into her personal bank account. Some checks were issued and "voided" in the Board's internal records but nonetheless presented to the bank for deposit.

Attorney General Strange commended Assistant Attorneys General Ben Baxley, Pete Smyczek and Stephanie Billingslea of his Public Corruption and White Collar Crimes Division, as well as the Attorney General's Investigations Division. He also thanked Lynn Otto of the Examiners of Public Accounts for assistance.

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