

NEWS RELEASE

Luther Strange

Alabama Attorney General



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AG STRANGE ANNOUNCES SENTENCING, JAIL TIME FOR CRIMES INVOLVING FORGERIES AND THEFTS OF ABOUT \$200,000

Commends Public Corruption and White Collar Crime Division

(MONTGOMERY)— Attorney General Luther Strange announced the sentencing of a Gardendale woman for schemes involving forgeries and thefts of approximately \$200,000 in checks and cash from her former employers, Baptist Health Systems and Alabama Lock and key, both in Jefferson County. Yesterday, Deborah Thompson was sentenced to 10 years on each of the four counts to serve three years in jail, followed by five years of probation. In addition, she was ordered to pay \$150,000 restitution to Baptist Health, \$2,389 restitution to the Alabama Association of Healthcare Access Managers and \$839.20 restitution to the Attorney General's Office. She is to pay \$100 per month after she is released from jail. Thompson was taken to jail today.

"This case is an excellent example of the kind of white collar crime that is being pursued aggressively by this office," said Attorney General Strange. "Deborah Thompson was sentenced and brought to justice because of the outstanding work conducted by our Public Corruption and White Collar Crime Division."

Thompson pleaded guilty on January 26 in Jefferson County Circuit Court to one count of first-degree theft, once count of second-degree theft and two counts of second-degree possession of forged instruments. The Attorney General's Office presented the following information about Thompson's crimes to Jefferson County Circuit Judge Clyde Jones during the hearing on January 26.

Regarding the conviction for possession of forged instruments, in 1988 as an employee of Alabama Lock and Key, Thompson told the business that customers had requested refunds for safes that were returned. She caused refund checks to be made payable to certain customers and she deposited them into her own bank account. Thompson claimed the customers who requested the refunds agreed to split the money with her. The two customers whose endorsed checks were forged told investigators they never requested a refund from Alabama Lock and Key and never agreed to any scheme involving a refund or splitting money with Thompson. She pleaded guilty to possessing two checks written to two different customers for refund whereby the customer's endorsed signatures were forged.

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Regarding the first-degree theft charge, Thompson was employed by Baptist Health Systems as director of patient access, by which she had access to bank deposits for the Princeton Guest Rooms affiliated with Princeton Baptist Medical Center. An audit for the Princeton Guest Rooms rental deposits revealed that \$195,000 in cash was unaccounted. An internal investigation conducted by the Baptist Health Systems Audit Department uncovered a theft scheme in which Thompson routinely removed checks from the Princeton Guest Rooms receipts and asked cashiers to cash out checks with money from other departments for the alleged purpose of giving refunds to guests dissatisfied with their rooms. Additionally, Thompson removed cash from the Guest Rooms deposits, claiming guests were lined up at her door on a daily basis requesting refunds. However, there was no documentation of guests receiving refunds and personnel at Princeton Guest Rooms stated that they knew nothing of guests being lined up at Thompson's office daily with refund requests. An investigation by the Attorney General's office revealed very few refunds were requested by the guests of Princeton Guest Rooms.

Regarding the second-degree theft charge, during Thompson's employment as director of patient access at Baptist Health Systems, she attended an Alabama Association of Hospital Managers Conference at Orange Beach in July of 2007. The Association paid \$753 in advance for a one-bedroom condominium for three nights for Thompson's use. She took her family to the conference and rented a three- bed room condominium for six nights. Thompson did not use the one-bedroom condominium paid for in advance by the Association. Upon her return to work, Thompson filed an expense report to Baptist Health Systems for \$2,389, which included the amount pre-paid by the Association and the extra expense to cover payment for the larger accommodations and extended stay. On August 2, 2007, \$2,389 was directly deposited into Thompson's checking account by Baptist Health Systems as a result of her fraudulent claim.

Attorney General Strange commended Assistant Attorneys General Stephanie Billingslea, Bill Lisenby, Laura Cuthbert and Ben Baxley, as well as Administrative Assistant Lori Arnold from his Public Corruption and White Collar Crimes Division. He also commended agents from his Investigations Division. Attorney General Strange praised Brantley Synco, director of Audit Services for Baptist Health Systems, for the expert manner of his internal investigation of the thefts and for the professional manner in which he worked with the investigators and prosecutors of the Attorney General's office in preparing the case for prosecution.