

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AG STRANGE ANNOUNCES ARREST OF FORMER MADISON COUNTY DHR SENIOR SOCIAL WORKER FOR FELONIES

(MONTGOMERY)--Attorney General Luther Strange announced the arrest today of a former Madison County Department of Human Resources senior social worker for charges of first-degree theft, second-degree criminal possession of a forged instrument, and an ethics law violation. Stephanie Harris Bell, 53, of Hampton Cove, was arrested on December 16 and released on bond December 20.

Attorney General Strange's Special Prosecutions Division presented evidence to a Madison County grand jury, resulting in Bell's indictment* on November 30. Specifically, the indictment charges her with first-degree theft of more than \$2,500 from the Madison County Department of Human Resources/ Alabama Department of Human Resources; second-degree possession of a forged instrument, specifically a travel reimbursement request; and intentionally using her official position as a senior social worker for the Madison County Department of Human Resources for her personal gain.

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

If convicted, Bell faces a maximum penalty of 2 to 20 years' imprisonment for each of the theft and ethics charges, which are Class B felonies, and 1 year and 1 day to 10 years' imprisonment for second-degree criminal possession of a forged instrument, which is a Class C felony.

Attorney General Strange thanked the special agents of the Alabama Ethics Commission for their assistance.

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

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