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Attorney General Steve Marshall Announces Conviction of Former Bookkeeper of Chambers County Probate Court for Violating Alabama's Ethics Law

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Steve Marshall announced the conviction of a former bookkeeper for the Chambers County Probate Court for using her official position to steal \$299,861.68 from the Court.

Rene Welch, 57, of Valley, pleaded guilty on August 12, to violating Alabama's ethics law by using her official position as bookkeeper for the probate court for personal gain. She was sentenced in Chambers County Circuit Court to 10 years in prison. Her sentence was split, and she was ordered to serve 18 months in prison followed by five years of probation. She was also ordered to pay full restitution.

Between July 2013 and December 2017, Welch was employed by former Judge Brandy Easlick of the Chambers County Probate Court. During that time, Welch used her position as bookkeeper to steal \$299,861.68 from the Probate Court. Auditors with the Alabama Department of Examiners of Public Accounts discovered Welch's theft, and she resigned from her position.

"When public employees are entrusted as guardians of the people's money, they are accordingly held to a high standard," said Attorney General Marshall. "It is unconscionable that Ms. Welch used her official position to steal nearly \$300,000 in public money from the Chambers County Probate Court. Her crime was discovered, and she was rightfully prosecuted under Alabama's ethics law."

Attorney General Marshall thanked the Department of Examiners of Public Accounts for its investigative assistance in this case. He commended Assistant Attorneys General Jasper Roberts and Peggy Rossmanith as well as Special Agents of the Attorney General's Special Prosecutions Division for their outstanding work to achieve this conviction.

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