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February 17, 2010

MADIGAN: FORMER JEFFERSON COUNTY EMPLOYEE PLEADS GUILTY TO THEFT AND OFFICIAL MISCONDUCT

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan announced that the former Jefferson County Deputy Treasurer, Brenda Pickett, 61, pleaded guilty Tuesday to theft in excess of \$10,000, as well as to official misconduct before Judge Joe Harrison during a court hearing in Mt. Vernon. The Attorney General's office prosecuted the case at the request of the Jefferson County State's Attorney's office.

"Officials who steal public funds betray the trust that is granted to them," Attorney General Madigan said. "This crime is particularly egregious at a time when counties are struggling to make ends meet and provide important services to residents."

In August 2008, a Jefferson County grand jury indicted Pickett, of Mt. Vernon, on one count of theft, a Class 1 felony, punishable by four to 15 years in the Illinois Department of Corrections, and one count of official misconduct, a Class 3 felony, which carries the possibility of two to five years in prison. Probation may also be granted for one or both charges.

This case arose when the Jefferson County Treasurer, Deborah Marlow, notified the Illinois State Police that a clerk in her office had discovered that a deposit totaling \$858.35 had not been made after deposit slips had been prepared by Pickett. Pickett later told investigators that she took money from the office from May through July 2008 and in previous years. A financial review established that Pickett took in excess of \$10,000.

The Jefferson County Circuit Court set a status hearing in the case for March 30, 2010, and scheduled the sentencing hearing on the felony convictions for May 18, 2010. The Jefferson County Probation Department will conduct a pre-sentence investigation. Pickett remains free on \$20,000 bond.

Deputy Bureau Chief Mary Bucaro and Assistant Attorney General David Navarro prosecuted the case for Attorney General Madigan's Public Integrity Unit.

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