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MADIGAN CHARGES EX-CTA WORKERS WITH WIRE FRAUD, IDENTITY THEFT***Attorney General Indicts Married Couple for Scheme to Access Retirement Funds by Submitting Children's Fake Death Certificates, Stealing Coworkers IDs***

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced charges against former Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) employees for a scheme to steal thousands of dollars from the agency's deferred compensation program that involved submitting fake death certificates for their living children and stealing the identities of former coworkers.

Donella Anderson Watkins, 41, of Lansing, was charged with wire fraud, identity theft and continuing a financial crimes enterprise. Her husband, Sammie Watkins, 55, of Lansing, was charged with wire fraud and attempted identity theft. The couple, both formerly CTA employees, appeared earlier today in Cook County Criminal Court to formally face the charges before Judge Clayton Crane.

Madigan alleged that the Watkins submitted false documentation to their deferred compensation program administrators to seek emergency withdrawals from their accounts without incurring a tax penalty. The false documentation included submitting fake death certificates for their living children to create an "emergency need" for supposed funeral expenses. In addition, Madigan alleged the Watkins stole the identities of other CTA employees to submit false withdrawal forms on their behalf without the employees' knowledge.

An investigation by Madigan's Public Integrity Bureau revealed that Donella Watkins secured \$18,000 in the name of a co-worker. Madigan said the alleged scheme was uncovered after Sammie attempted to make an emergency withdrawal in the name of another employee.

"The defendants took unthinkable steps to attempt to avoid tax penalties and steal retirement funds from their coworkers," Madigan said. "My office will ensure they are held accountable for concocting this elaborate, illegal scheme."

The public is reminded that the defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty by a court of law.

The cases were referred to Madigan's office from the Office of the Executive Inspector General. Bureau Chief David Navarro, Assistant Attorney General Christina Chojnacki and Associate Director James S. Dorger are handling the cases for Madigan's office.

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