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MADIGAN: EX-CTA WORKERS SENTENCED IN FRAUD SCHEME**Attorney General Announces Sentence for Scheme to Access Retirement Funds by Submitting Children's Fake Death Certificates, Stealing Coworkers IDs**

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced that two former Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) employees were sentenced 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, 43, of Lansing, pled guilty to continuing a financial crimes enterprise and to fraudulent filing of an Illinois tax return and was sentenced to five years in prison by Cook County Circuit Court Judge Clayton Crane.

Her husband Sammie Watkins, 56, also a former CTA employee, pled guilty to attempted identity theft and fraudulent filing of an Illinois tax return and was sentenced to eight months in jail and 18 months of probation.

The defendants 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. The couple also stole the identities of other CTA employees to submit false withdrawal forms on their behalf without the employees' knowledge.

"These defendants took extreme steps to steal retirement funds from their coworkers and to avoid tax penalties," Madigan said.

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 Watkins attempted to make an emergency withdrawal in the name of another employee.

The cases were referred to Madigan's office from the Office of the Executive Inspector General. The Illinois Department of Revenue's Criminal Investigation Division assisted in the investigation. Bureau Chief David Navarro, Assistant Attorney General Christina Chojnacki and Associate Director James S. Dorger handled the cases for Madigan's office.

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