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**MADIGAN: TOBACCO STORE OPERATOR CHARGED WITH TAX FRAUD**

**Chicago** — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced charges against the operator of a Will County tobacco store for defrauding the state of Illinois out of more than \$400,000 in sales taxes.

Mazen M. Nassar, 38, of Orland Park, was charged with sales tax evasion of over \$100,000, a Class 1 felony punishable by four to 15 years in the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC); money laundering of over \$10,000, a Class 2 felony punishable by three to seven years in the IDOC; wire fraud, a Class 3 felony punishable by two to five years in the IDOC; and filing a fraudulent sales tax return, a Class 3 felony punishable by two to five years in the IDOC. The court set Nassar's bond at \$500,000.

Madigan alleged that Nassar, doing business as M&M Expo Inc., underreported more than \$5.8 million in sales from Smokers Expo located at 12330 W. 143rd St. in Homer Glen. As a result of underreporting sales to the Illinois Department of Revenue (IDOR) between January 2011 and February 2014, Nassar defrauded the state out of more than \$465,000. Nassar was previously charged in 2012 with federal felony charges for conspiring to purchase and possess contraband cigarettes that did not bear the state and local tax stamps required by law. He was later convicted and sentenced to 12 months in prison.

"This defendant once again sought to evade tax laws at the expense of the state and Illinois taxpayers," Madigan said. "We will continue to hold these offenders accountable."

The case was investigated by IDOR's Criminal Investigations Division.

"Whenever allegations of sales tax fraud come to light, it is important that we examine their validity and act accordingly," said Connie Beard, director of the Illinois Department of Revenue. "I commend the job performed by the Department of Revenue's Criminal Investigations Unit, as well as the work currently being done by the Attorney General's office regarding this matter."

Assistant Attorneys General Gregory Stucka and Anshuman Vaidya are handling the case for Madigan's Special Prosecutions Bureau.

The public is reminded that the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

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