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MADIGAN CHARGES MCHENRY COUNTY MAN FOR THEFT AND BANK FRAUD AFTER LURING COUPLE INTO MORTGAGE REFINANCING SCAM

Chicago —Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced charges against a McHenry County man for defrauding a couple who was struggling to keep their home by deceiving them with a mortgage refinancing scam.

Carlos Meza, 56, of Lake in the Hills, was arraigned earlier today in McHenry County Circuit Court before Judge Sharon L. Prather on one count of continuing financial crimes enterprise, a Class 1 felony; one count of theft by unauthorized control over \$10,000, a Class 2 felony; and one count of financial institution fraud, a Class 2 felony.

Madigan alleged that between May 1, 2013 and March 31, 2014, Meza stole thousands of dollars from Randy and Lori Stroh, a married couple Meza met at church, under the guise that he could help them refinance their home mortgage. Meza led the Strohs to believe he had hired people to assist in the refinancing process and directed Randy Stroh to make checks payable to those people in various amounts. Instead of sending the checks to those individuals, Meza forged signatures and deposited the checks into his personal bank account. In the meantime, Meza had directed the Strohs to discontinue payments on their mortgage, and they have since lost their home.

“Meza preyed on people who considered him a trusted friend and advisor,” Madigan said. “Instead of assisting them to save their home by refinancing their mortgage, he stole their money and the home was lost.”

Attorney General Madigan has aggressively targeted mortgage rescue schemes that emerged in the wake of the national housing crisis. She has filed over 50 lawsuits against loan modification scam operations and issued nearly 700 cease-and-desist letters. Her office runs the Homeowner Helpline at (866) 544-7151, which is staffed by experts in her office who can provide borrowers with guidance on avoiding foreclosure and how to seek help from a HUD-certified housing counselor.

Madigan’s office is prosecuting the case based on a referral from the Illinois Secretary of State’s Office. Assistant Attorney General Nicole Sutcliffe is handling the case for Madigan’s Special Prosecutions Bureau.

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