



January 26, 2017

ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN CHARGES CON ARTISTS WITH MULTIPLE COUNTS OF THEFT, FORGERY AND FINANCIAL FRAUD

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced charges against a suburban Chicago ex-convict couple with extensive criminal backgrounds who have scammed consumers across Illinois. For decades the Browns have been accused of defrauding employers, investors, vendors and landlords, among others.

Robert Brown, 78, and his wife Constance Brown, 66, of Orland Park, were arraigned earlier today in Cook County Circuit Court before Judge Arthur Hill on numerous charges of theft, forgery, financial fraud and securities and wire fraud. If convicted, the Browns could face more than 75 years in prison.

"The Browns are serial con artists with a complete disregard for the law and the consequences of their actions," Madigan said. "These charges will hold them accountable for criminal schemes that defrauded people across the state."

In filing the charges against the Browns, Madigan detailed numerous schemes carried out by the Browns using Robert Brown's purported business, Northern Gas and Electric LLC (NGE). Robert Brown repeatedly presented a one-page balance sheet for his company that falsely stated the business held more than \$4 million in assets, which duped people into thinking he could be trusted to make payments. The fake balance sheet helped Robert fuel his various scams, including leasing a house, leasing a restaurant and engaging in energy sales deals.

One such scheme, Madigan alleged, was negotiated by the Browns with an Oak Lawn homeowner by requesting the title of the home be held in NGE's name by producing the phony balance sheet as a way to falsely prove they could afford the home. The Browns came looking to see the house that was listed online. During the negotiations of a rent-to-own deal and before a final closing, the Browns insisted the homeowner allow them access to the house to begin moving in their belongings. They moved in and refused to vacate, never paying rent or proceeding with the closing. When they were forced to leave, they allegedly left extensive damage to the home and stole various appliances.

In another scam, Madigan alleged the Browns negotiated a lease for a banquet hall in DeKalb known as South Pointe that was in need of extensive renovations and took possession of the property in June 2013. The Browns then scammed people for investment money under the guise of renovating the banquet hall, but the couple never paid rent and failed to pay outstanding electric and other renovation-related bills.

In addition, Madigan alleged Robert Brown produced phony work contracts and "earned" more than \$60,000 in unjustified commissions based on forgeries. Madigan alleged Brown offered to work on commission for BKE Mechanical, an Orland Park business that purchases electricity at a bulk rate and resells it to small companies at a modest markup. After Robert Brown produced a few contracts and was paid his commissions, BKE Mechanical's owner contacted the purchasers and found out they never agreed to the contracts and their signatures on the contracts were forged. In addition, BKE Mechanical's owner loaned Brown \$25,000 for renovations at the South Pointe banquet hall in DeKalb, but Brown never repaid the loan.

Robert Brown was charged with one count of theft over \$100,000, a Class 1 felony, and five counts of forgery, a Class 3 felony. Constance Brown was charged with theft by deception over \$10,000, a Class 2 felony, and two counts of securities fraud and wire fraud, Class 3 felonies. Robert and Constance Brown were also both charged with theft over \$100,000, a Class 1 felony; theft by deception over \$100,000, a Class 1 felony; two counts of forgery, Class 3 felonies; attempted theft over \$1,000,000, a Class 1 felony; and wire fraud, a Class 3 felony.

Bond for the Browns was set at \$120,000 each. Their next court appearance is set for March 3.

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

Assistant Attorney General Stephanie Pauly is handling the case for Madigan's Special Prosecutions Bureau.

-30-

[Return to January 2017 Press Releases](#)

