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MADIGAN: COOK COUNTY ACCOUNTANT CHARGED WITH THEFT, TAX FRAUD & IDENTITY THEFT***Attorney General Announces Charges Against Tax Preparer for Defrauding State & His Clients***

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced the indictment of a Chicago accountant and tax preparer for allegedly defrauding the state out of nearly half a million dollars by forging state tax documents.

Oscar Garrett, 55, of Chicago, was charged in Cook County Circuit Court with identity theft, income tax evasion, theft of government property, money laundering, mail fraud, wire fraud and forgery. Garrett, an accountant who offered tax preparing services to clients, faces between six and 30 years in prison.

Madigan alleged that between 2011 and 2015, Garrett obtained fraudulent tax refunds on behalf of over a dozen clients by filing 1099-R forms in their names. The 1099 forms, which are filed to report self-employed income, were filed on behalf of the clients who did not have such income to report. As a result, Garrett was able to fraudulently obtain tax refunds from the state, while his clients were unaware of the fraudulent nature of the returns being filed in their names. Madigan alleged Garrett's scheme defrauded the state out of over \$485,000.

Garrett previously spent more than two and half years in federal prison after being convicted of operating a similar scheme defrauding the Internal Revenue Service.

"The defendant operated a scam to defraud the state and his clients out of hundreds of thousands of dollars for his own profit," Madigan said. "When selecting a professional tax preparer, consumers should make sure they hire a reputable accountant and always review their tax return before signing and filing it."

Garrett's bond was set at \$300,000 with the requirement that he show proof he has a valid source of income before posting bond, and his arraignment is set for April 13.

The case was investigated by the Illinois Department of Revenue's Criminal Investigations Division with assistance from the Chicago Police Department's Special Intelligence Section.

"Allegations of tax fraud serve as an important reminder to taxpayers to remain vigilant when seeking tax preparation services," said Connie Beard, Director of the Illinois Department of Revenue. "I commend the job performed by the Department of Revenue's Criminal Investigations Division, as well as the work currently being done by the Attorney General's office in this case."

Unit Supervisor Anshuman Vaidya is 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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