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August 8, 2017

MADIGAN: ESSEX TOWNSHIP CLERK PLEADS GUILTY TO THEFT, SENTENCED TO PRISON***Attorney General Pursued Public Corruption Charges of Kankakee Area Official Over Brazen Theft of Taxpayer Money***

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced former Essex Township Clerk Traci Freytag pleaded guilty to stealing taxpayer money for personal expenses including two trips to Florida.

Freytag, 50, of Essex, Ill., pleaded guilty to one count of theft of government property, a Class 1 felony and was sentenced to four years in prison by Kankakee County Circuit Court Judge Kathy Elliott.

Freytag was appointed township clerk in August 2014. Between November 2014 through May 2016, Freytag deposited \$94,000 of Essex township checks into her personal bank account. As clerk, Freytag had access to Essex township bank accounts and was able to write checks from those accounts.

The scheme was uncovered after a township employee indicated that his payroll check from the township had bounced. A FDIC-OIG investigator then inquired with the State Bank of Herscher, which holds the Essex township account, and discovered the funds had been completely depleted. The investigator also discovered multiple Essex Township checks written to and signed by Freytag that were deposited into her personal US Bank account.

"The defendant used her position as township clerk to cheat taxpayers and enrich herself in a public corruption scheme," Madigan said. "This sentence ensures she will be held accountable for her actions."

The FDIC-OIG referred the case to Madigan's office for prosecution, and Assistant Attorney General Nicole D. Sutcliffe handled the case for Madigan's Special Prosecutions Bureau.

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