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ATTORNEY GENERAL RAOUL CHARGES OWNER AND MANAGER OF CHAMPAIGN CONVENIENCE STORE WITH THEFT & TAX FRAUD

Chicago — Attorney General Kwame Raoul today announced charges against the owner and manager of a Champaign convenience store for defrauding the state out of more than \$100,000 in sales tax revenue.

Kirtikumar Patel, 50, of Champaign, Ill., and Prakashkumar Patel, 43, of Mahomet, Ill., were charged in Champaign County Circuit Court with theft of government funds over \$100,000, a Class X felony, and sales tax evasion over \$100,000, a Class 1 felony. Prakashkumar Patel was also charged with two counts of filing a fraudulent Illinois income tax return, Class 4 felonies. If convicted, Kirtikumar Patel faces up to six to 30 years in prison, while Prakashkumar Patel faces up to six to 30 years.

Prakashkumar Patel is the owner of Blue Star 2, a convenience store located at 918 1/2 W. Bradley Ave. in Champaign, which Kirtikumar Patel managed. According to Raoul, between March 2013 and March 2018, the store collected the correct sales tax on purchases, but both men underreported sales tax numbers to the store's accountant. Raoul alleged that the men reported a higher number of low-tax-rate sales than the store actually made, and underreported high-tax-rate sales and total receipts. The store's accountant filed monthly sales tax returns, which were fraudulent since they were based on the underreported income. In the meantime, Prakashkumar and Kirtikumar kept the excess sales tax money.

"Individuals who falsify sales taxes are not just stealing from the state; they are stealing from the residents who rely on the important programs and services stolen tax revenues should have funded," Raoul said. "I appreciate the continued partnership of the Illinois Department of Revenue as we seek to hold these individuals accountable."

The investigation was conducted by the Illinois Department of Revenue's Criminal Investigations Division.

"Sales tax fraud robs the public of needed resources and harms legitimate businesses, and we remain vigilant to those who try to break the law," said Department of Revenue Director David Harris. "I congratulate our office of Criminal Investigations and the Attorney General's office for their hard work."

Prakashkumar and Kirtikumar are scheduled to appear in court on Sept. 1. The public is reminded that the defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

Assistant Attorneys General Alexis Overstreet and Mansoor Broachwala are handling the case for Raoul's Special Prosecutions Bureau.