

NEWS RELEASE

Luther Strange

Alabama Attorney General



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AG ANNOUNCES GUILTY PLEAS IN ELMORE COUNTY FOR CORONER, FUNERAL HOME DIRECTOR

(MONTGOMERY)— Attorney General Luther Strange announced the convictions today of Elmore County Coroner Timothy Ellison and Yancey Joe Mitchell III, director of Hillside Mortuary in Wetumpka. The convictions stem from Ellison submitting inflated charges to the county, state and several municipal entities for reimbursement in transporting bodies. Mitchell assisted Ellison by providing false paperwork.

Ellison pleaded guilty to a felony violation of the state ethics law by using his official position for personal gain, to second-degree theft, also a felony, and to third-degree theft, which is a misdemeanor. Ellison's guilty plea included \$7,913 in restitution to be made to the various public entities from which he stole. Ellison is scheduled to be sentenced on April 9. Under State law, a public official convicted of a felony is ineligible to hold public office.

Mitchell pleaded guilty to third-degree theft of property by aiding and abetting Ellison in his crimes. He was sentenced to 12 months probation and ordered to pay a \$250 fine and court costs.

Under state law, a coroner has the responsibility to transport bodies from a crime scene to the Department of Forensic Sciences or to a funeral home. The coroner may be reimbursed for actual expenses in doing so. Ellison submitted inflated invoices for his costs, and Mitchell aided and abetted him with false invoices to support Ellison's wrongful claims.

"I am pleased that this prosecution put an end to the crimes of a corrupt public official who betrayed the public trust and stole taxpayers' money," said Attorney General Strange. "Today, Ellison and his accomplice have been held to account for their wrongdoing. With the conclusion of this case when Ellison is sentenced, we expect that the stolen funds will be restored to their rightful public entities."

Attorney General Strange commended those involved in bringing this case to a successful conclusion, noting in particular Assistant Attorneys General Bill Lisenby and Pete Smyczek, and Special Agents of his Special Prosecutions Division. He also thanked the Elmore County Sheriff's Office and the police departments of Wetumpka, Millbrook and Tallassee for their assistance, and the State Ethics Commission for its referral of this matter.

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