

NEWS RELEASE

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AG STRANGE ANNOUNCES CONVICTION FOR CRIMES INVOLVING FORGERIES, THEFTS OF ABOUT \$200,000

COMMENDS PUBLIC CORRUPTION & WHITE COLLAR CRIME DIVISION

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Luther Strange announced the conviction yesterday of a Gardendale woman for schemes involving forgeries and theft of approximately \$200,000 in checks and cash from her former employers, Baptist Health Systems and Alabama Lock and Key, both in Jefferson County. Deborah Thompson pleaded guilty in Jefferson County Circuit Court to one count of first-degree theft, one count of second-degree theft, and two counts of second-degree possession of forged instruments. Sentencing is set for March 7.

“This case is an excellent example of the kind of white collar crime that should be pursued aggressively,” said Attorney General Strange. “I am proud of the outstanding work conducted by our Public Corruption and White Collar Crime Division, as well as of the dedicated efforts of an employee of the victim, Baptist Health Systems, Inc., in conducting his own thorough internal investigation to bring these crimes to light.”

The Attorney General’s Office presented the following information about Thompson’s crimes to Jefferson County Circuit Judge Clyde Jones during a hearing yesterday afternoon:

Regarding the convictions for possession of forged instruments, in 1998 as an employee of Alabama Lock and Key, Thompson informed the business that customers were requesting refunds for safes that had been returned. She caused refund checks to be made payable to certain customers, took the checks herself and deposited them into her bank account. She pleaded guilty to possessing two checks written to two different customers for refunds whereby the customer’s endorsed signatures were forged. Thompson claimed that the customers had requested the refund and that they agreed to split the money with her. However, the two customers whose endorsed checks were forged told investigators that they never requested a refund from Alabama Lock & Key, did not endorse the checks themselves, and never agreed to any scheme that involved a refund or splitting money with Thompson.



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Regarding the first-degree theft charge, Thompson was employed by Baptist Health Systems as director of patient access, by which she had access to bank deposits for Princeton Guest Rooms which is affiliated with Princeton Baptist Medical Center. An audit of the Princeton Guest Rooms rental deposits revealed that \$195,000 in cash was unaccounted. An internal investigation conducted by the Baptist Health Systems Audit Department uncovered a theft scheme in which Thompson routinely removed checks from the Princeton Guest Rooms receipts and asked cashiers to cash out checks with money from other departments for the alleged purpose of giving refunds to guests who were dissatisfied with the guest rooms. Additionally, Thompson removed cash from the Guest Rooms deposits, claiming that she used the money to give refunds. Thompson claimed that guests were lined up at her office door on a daily basis requesting refunds, and that she paid cash refunds to guests regardless of the method of payment. Personnel at Princeton Guest Rooms stated that in fact, refunds were rarely given, and that they knew nothing about guests being lined up at Thompson's office on a daily basis requesting refunds. There was no documentation that guests had been given the refunds. An investigation by the Attorney General's Office revealed that very few refunds were requested by guests of Princeton Guest Rooms.

Regarding the second-degree theft charge, during Thompson's employment as director of patient access at Baptist Health Systems, she attended an Alabama Association of Healthcare Access Managers in Orange Beach in July of 2007. The Association paid in advance \$753 for a one-bedroom condominium for three nights for Thompson's use. Thompson took her family to the conference and rented a three bedroom condominium instead of the one-bedroom for which the Association had paid, and she stayed six nights instead. Thompson paid \$1,546 of her personal funds to cover the additional expenses that she incurred by staying the three extra nights and in the larger more expensive condominium. Upon her return to work, Thompson filed an expense report with Baptist Health Systems for \$2,389, which included the amount that the Association had pre-paid as well as the additional amount she had paid for the extra days and larger accommodations. On August 3, 2007, \$2,389 was directly deposited into Thompson's checking account by Baptist Health Systems as a result of her fraudulent claim.

Attorney General Strange commended Assistant Attorneys General Stephanie Billingslea, Bill Lisenby, Laura Cuthbert and Ben Baxley, and Administrative Assistant Lori Arnold, of his Public Corruption and White Collar Crimes Division; and his entire Investigations Division for their diligent work. He also praised Brantley Synco, director of Audit Services for Baptist Health Systems, for the expert manner of his internal investigation of the thefts and for the professional manner in which he worked with the investigators and prosecutors of the Attorney General's Office in preparing the case for prosecution.