

Trial Finds New Jersey Lawyer Guilty of Fraud



Summary: An Essex County jury found lawyer Stephanie Hand guilty of money laundering, conspiracy, and theft in a scheme defrauding a mortgage lender.

An Essex County lawyer, deep in a scheme to steal identities for bogus mortgage loan applications, was found guilty at trial, according to Attorney General Christopher S. Porrino. The scheme stole approximately \$873,520 from a lender with the use of stolen identities in order to file mortgage loan applications for two fake real estate transactions, falsifying settlement statements and diverting loan proceeds.

The Essex County jury found Stephanie Hand, 52, guilty of second-degree charges of money laundering, conspiracy, and theft by deception. The trial lasted for three weeks before Superior Court Judge John I. Gizzo. The charges came from an indictment after an investigation by the Division of Criminal Justice, assisted by the Passaic County Prosecutor's Office and U.S. Secret Service. Hand will be sentenced May 12.

Attorney General Porrino said, "This attorney took an oath to uphold the law, but she stood that oath on its head by using her law license to conspire in a criminal scheme to steal more than \$873,000 from a lender. This verdict ensures that attorney Hand will pay for her corruption and greed."

Director Elie Honing of the Division of Criminal Justice added, "This verdict is a testament to the hard work and expertise of our attorneys and investigators in handling a complex case of financial fraud. As long as con artists continue to target the big payoff promised by mortgage loans, we'll continue to investigate and prosecute these cases aggressively."

Hand conspired with Thomas D'Anna, 41, in 2009. In the two transactions, D'Anna or his company sold the property but no real buyer existed. Hand and D'Anna used stolen identities from Puerto Rico to apply for loans to purchase the properties. They submitted fake bank statements and other false information needed to get the loans. Hand served as the attorney and settlement agent for the closings on both properties.

Hand filed HUD settlement statements for each property closing, signifying that each buyer had made the required payments and the loans were properly disbursed. In actuality, both mortgages on the properties were paid off. The amount they were paid by the mortgage lender was divided between Hand, D'Anna, and a third conspirator, Julio Concepcion. D'Anna "sold" the properties at highly inflated prices. They made a few monthly payments on each new mortgage loan.

D'Anna pleaded guilty to second-degree conspiracy with a recommended five-year sentence. Concepcion pleaded guilty to first and second-degree conspiracy charges with a recommended 10-year sentence. Hand faces five to ten years in state prison and a fine of \$150,000. The money laundering charge carries an enhanced fine of up to \$500,000 and an anti-money laundering profiteering fine of \$250,000. Hand is facing a total of nearly \$1 million in fines.

Trying the case were Deputy Attorneys General Jillian Carpenter and Anthony Torntore of the Division of Criminal Justice Financial & Computer Crimes Bureau, with assistance from Analyst Nathalie Kurzawa. Supervising the case was Lt. Vincent Gaeta, Sgt. James Scott, Deputy Bureau Chief Mark Kurzawa, and Bureau Chief Michael Monahan. Lead detective was Roxanna Ordonex and Detective Mark Byrnes served as a trial detective.

What do you think drives attorneys to break the law and think they will get away with it? Tell us in the comments below.

To learn more about attorneys caught in money laundering, read these articles:

- ["DWI Dude" Lawyer Charged with Money Laundering](#)
- [Disbarred Former Baker & McKenzie Partner Sentenced 2 Years for Money Laundering and Conspiring Securities Fraud](#)
- [New Jersey Lawyer Charged with Money Laundering](#)

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