

***NEWS RELEASE from***



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CONTACT: Bernard J. Youngblood (313) 224-5856  
Maria Miller, Prosecutor's Office (313) 224-5817  
John Roach, Sheriff's Office (313) 213-5162

## **Convictions and Prison Sentences Piling Up for Wayne County Fraud Task Force**

(DETROIT) – The efforts of the Wayne County Fraud Task Force continue to pay off as the team added a number of convictions and prison sentences to its record, facilitating the apprehension, conviction and sentencing of two defendants in fraudulent property cases last week. The fraud fighting team consists of Wayne County Register of Deeds Bernard J. Youngblood, Wayne County Sheriff Warren C. Evans and Wayne County Prosecutor Kym L. Worthy along with members of each of their staffs.

“We are extremely pleased with the results of the Fraud Task Force’s continuing effort to protect Wayne County residents from property fraud,” said Bernard J. Youngblood, Wayne County Register of Deeds. “We will continue to send a message to property scammers -- we’re coming after you and you’re going to jail.”

Danny Stokes, 44, was sentenced to three to 10 years for obtaining money under false pretenses for over \$20,000, two to 14 years on three counts of uttering and publishing and three counts of forgery. These charges are a result of Stokes’ act of forging power of attorney in order to allow the fraudulent sale of the victim’s house and falsely acquiring the mortgage. Stokes was also sentenced to three to 10 years on second degree money laundering, two to five years on identity theft and two to five years on conspiracy charges. These sentences are to run concurrently. The defendant was also ordered to pay restitution to the victim.

“Defendant Stokes thought he could fool the judge and the jury by keeping his name out of the transaction and using other people,” said Abed Hammoud, lead Wayne County prosecuting attorney, Deed Fraud Unit. “But when we followed the money, the evidence clearly pointed to him as the mastermind, coordinator and beneficiary of the fraud.”

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Lamont Williams, 43, was sentenced to three years probation for forging signatures and documents. Williams fabricated a fraudulent deed with the forged signature of the deceased owner of the house. He proceeded to rent out the rooms of the house and collect rent until he was arrested. In addition to his sentence, Williams signed quit claim deed giving the property back to the victim, who was present in court. Williams was ordered to pay \$15,000 in restitution which represents the money he made as he rented victim's property.

"Our Deed Fraud Task Force has been very successful in convicting the criminals that are trying to put honest, hardworking and often elderly citizens out of their most precious asset, their homes," said Kym L. Worthy, Wayne County Prosecutor. "Every time we convict another defendant it should be a deterrent to anyone thinking about committing deed or mortgage fraud in Wayne County."

"Deed fraud and mortgage fraud are particularly disturbing cases because the victims often never know what hit them until their lives have been turned upside down," said Wayne County Sheriff Warren C. Evans. "Our task force has done a remarkable job getting convictions and returning properties to their rightful owners."

With the addition of these convictions and sentences, the fraud team has opened over 350 cases of suspected fraudulent property ownership activity with 100% conviction rate for those cases that have been tried.

In 2005, Youngblood established this first in the nation Document Fraud Task Force within the three offices of the Register, Sheriff's Department and the County Prosecutor. Currently, four sheriff deputies and two prosecuting attorneys are joined with specific members of the Register of Deeds staff and located within the Register's office facilities. These "fraud fighters" direct 100% of their time toward investigating mortgage and deed fraud within the county. They also offer a fraud detection hotline, (313) 224-5869, which allows people to voice concerns directly.

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