



NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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VENTURA, California – District Attorney Gregory D. Totten announced today that on October 16, 2014, Superior Court Judge Kent Kellegrew sentenced Laura Leesha Means (DOB 12/31/54) of Pismo Beach, California, to 15 years 8 months in prison. Means was previously convicted by jury of 17 felony counts, including grand theft, money laundering, and filing a false tax return with intent to evade paying taxes. Means then pled no contest to the 13 remaining felony counts and enhancements to which the jury could not reach verdicts, including the aggravated white collar crime enhancement.

Means, a retired deputy sheriff, obtained a real estate sales license and worked as an agent for Troop Real Estate in Camarillo. In 2006, Means purchased a six-acre vacant parcel of land in Camarillo. Means made numerous false statements on the loan application to acquire the property. She then began marketing multiple one-acre lots for sale even though the property was not legally subdivided until July 2008.

Means convinced two buyers to release their purchase funds from escrow early so she could use their money solely to make improvements at the property. In September 2007, after receiving \$285,000 from one victim, Means immediately used the funds to pay personal expenditures such as her mortgage on her residence, a kitchen remodel, and her credit card bills. Means failed to report this money as income to the State Franchise Tax Board.

In September 2008, Means obtained an additional \$285,000 in cash from a second victim for the purpose of developing the property. Means embezzled approximately one-half of this second victim's proceeds and used the money to pay her personal bills. Means also failed to report this cash as income to the State Franchise Tax Board in 2008.

This case was the result of a joint investigation by the District Attorney's Real Estate Fraud Unit, the California Bureau of Real Estate and Franchise Tax Board.

In addition to the prison sentence, Means was ordered to pay restitution and fines in the following amounts: \$912,479 in restitution to victims; \$155,692 in restitution to the Franchise Tax Board; and a mandatory fine of \$1,140,000. As result of her conviction, Means' real estate license was ordered indefinitely suspended by the California Bureau of Real Estate

The District Attorney's Office filed a petition for a temporary restraining order to preserve approximately \$80,000 currently under Means' control for purposes of securing victim restitution. Further proceedings concerning the disposition of these funds are scheduled for November 20, 2014, at 8:30 a.m. in courtroom 43 of the Ventura County Superior Court.

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