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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Attorney General Moody's Statewide Prosecutors File Criminal Charges Against Olympus Pools Owner



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody's Office of Statewide Prosecution is filing criminal charges against the owner of a Tampa-based pool company for stealing more than $1.5 million from Floridians and failing to complete customers' pools. James Ivan Staten, Jr., owner and operator of Olympus Pools, faces charges of aggravated white-collar crime, organized scheme to defraud, grand theft and contractor fraud. Staten accepted large down payments and then left many consumers in Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco and Polk counties with no pools and destroyed yards. Attorney General Moody, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office announced the charges today in Tampa.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "For many people, finally saving enough money to buy a pool takes years of dreaming and hard work, but for the victimized customers of Olympus Pools, their dream turned into a nightmare. This defendant conned numerous Florida property owners by demanding large down payments on pools, then abandoning job sites—destroying backyards and leaving customers short of funds to try and fix the mess."

FDLE Tampa Special Agent in Charge Mark Brutnell said, “Agents identified around 140 victims in Hillsborough, Pasco, Polk, Manatee, Sarasota and Pinellas counties. These victims trusted James Staten to build their dream pool, some paying in full using their entire life savings or retirement funds. But few pools were ever completed. Instead Staten preyed on these victims stealing their hard-earned money using it for personal vacations and Superbowl tickets. I thank our agents and analysts for their dedication to this case, along with Hillsborough County Sheriff’s Office and Attorney General Ashley Moody.”

Hillsborough County Sheriff Chad Chronister said, "This is a day that Hillsborough County residents have been waiting for, for years, especially the victims of this business owner turned con man. I commend the hard work of our Construction Fraud Unit detectives, whose sole purpose is hunting down the criminals that victimize our hard-working residents with fraud, theft, and bad deals. The partnership we share with Attorney General Ashley Moody and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement is unparalleled and resulted in a strong case that ensures justice is served."

According to the law enforcement investigation, Staten preyed on numerous Florida property owners over the last several years that contracted with Olympus Pools to build a pool. The customers paid Staten tens of thousands of dollars upfront by personal check, credit card, cash or through financing with the expectation that Staten would build the pool in a reasonable timeframe. Instead, Staten stole the money, deposited the funds into Olympus Pool accounts and transferred the money into a personal account to use for personal expenses.

After receiving a contract to build a pool, Staten hired subcontractors to do the work for a customer, and then, in many cases, failed to pay the subcontractors. This resulted in the subcontractors recording valid construction liens against the homeowner’s properties.

Staten is charged with counts of aggravated white-collar crime, organized scheme to defraud, grand theft, misapplication of construction funds and construction fraud, all felonies.

Attorney General Moody’s Office of Statewide Prosecution will handle the case.

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