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OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL STATE OF FLORIDA

Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Attorney General James Uthmeier Announces Conviction of Leesburg Woman for Elderly Exploitation

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General James Uthmeier announced that the Office of Statewide Prosecution secured a conviction against Kimberly Ruth Bitting of Leesburg for exploiting an elderly widow by abusing a power of attorney and position of trust to steal approximately $350,000.

“This defendant systematically exploited a vulnerable senior widow grieving the loss of her husband, abusing a power of attorney to drain her life savings, purchase property for herself, and isolate her from family,” **said Attorney General James Uthmeier**. “Florida will not tolerate those who prey on our elderly under the guise of caregiving or trust. I thank the Leesburg Police Department, Senior Assistant Statewide Prosecutor Taylor Chatting, and Special Counsel Ana Sacco for their outstanding work securing this conviction.”

According to the investigation, Bitting obtained power of attorney over her elderly neighbor—a senior widow—shortly after the victim’s husband died in August 2021. Over the next 15 to 18 months, Bitting used that authority to issue numerous checks from the victim’s accounts to her own accounts and those of others, make repeated ATM withdrawals confirmed by surveillance video, and transfer funds from investment accounts.

Bitting used more than $137,000 of the victim’s money to purchase two parcels of land in Calhoun County that were titled to a trust in Bitting’s name. Substantial sums also went to her daughter and a paid caregiver, often framed as payments for services.

Evidence established that Bitting restricted the victim’s communications with family, controlled access within the home, and threatened to have the victim declared incompetent and committed. The victim ultimately left of her own free will, revoked the power of attorney, and relocated to New York to live with her sister. Bitting subsequently reported the departure as a kidnapping.

Bitting was convicted of:

- Elderly Exploitation (Breach of Power of Attorney), a first-degree felony
- Elderly Exploitation (Position of Trust or Confidence), a first-degree felony
- Elderly Exploitation (Negligent or Intentional Misuse), a first-degree felony
- Cashing or Depositing an Item with Intent to Defraud, a third-degree felony

Co-defendant Ashton Silvis, Bitting's daughter who received substantial payments from the victim's accounts, entered an open plea on the eve of trial and awaits sentencing. Co-defendant Lara Larsen, who had served as a caregiver, testified for the State; her substantial assistance proved critical to the prosecution.

Co-defendants Silvis and Bitting are awaiting sentencing, which will be scheduled for a future date.

Senior Assistant Statewide Prosecutor Taylor Chatting and Special Counsel Ana Sacco were designated as a Special Assistant State Attorneys by State Attorney Bill Gladson in the Fifth Judicial Circuit.

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