



DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

News Release

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Oahu jury convicts woman in financial exploitation scam

(HONOLULU) An Oahu jury convicted a Waipahu woman of fourteen counts of felony Theft and Forgery for stealing thousands of dollars from a then-feeble, sixty-year-old stroke victim. Ligaya Delacruz faces a mandatory minimum prison term of one year and eight months when she is sentenced in October 2005, and risks other sentencing enhancements that could bring substantially more prison time.

Delacruz, now 51 years old, befriended the victim in 2003. Delacruz moved into one of the victim's rental units, and then became romantically involved with him. The victim suffered a massive stroke in June 2003 and was confined to Kaiser hospital for more than six months. During the victim's hospital stay, Delacruz fraudulently secured the victim's power of attorney despite strong protests and warnings from Kaiser social workers and physicians. Delacruz then deliberately and systematically went about stealing money from the victim's bank accounts, stealing his insurance money, and converting his rental income for her own use.

Attorney General Mark Bennett commended Kaiser for its role in identifying the suspicious activity, and family members for reporting the fraud to the State's Adult Protective Services. "In difficult cases involving vulnerable adults, it is crucial that law enforcement receive the assistance of family and of other caregivers," Bennett said. "It is important to recognize that vulnerable victims can easily fall prey to exploitation. We are happy that the jury returned a verdict that was consistent with the evidence."

Bennett continues to encourage victims, their relatives, and all caregivers to report theft and fraud to law enforcement and social service agencies.

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