



DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

**News Release**

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**Hilo couple found guilty in theft of elderly man's estate**

(HONOLULU) A Hilo jury has convicted a husband and wife for stealing a 91-year-old Hilo man's home, vacant lot, and more than \$60,000 from his bank accounts. Laura and Abraham Kauwe face more than twenty years in prison when they are sentenced on November 1, 2005.

The thefts occurred between 2000 and 2002, when Laura Kauwe purportedly answered a newspaper ad for a "caregiver" that was placed by the victim, who was then 86 years old and recently widowed. Laura Kauwe agreed to care for the victim in his Kalanikoia Street home in exchange for meals, room, and board.

Within two months of moving into the home, Laura Kauwe had manipulated the victim into signing her on as a co-owner of his savings and checking accounts. Also during that time, she persuaded the victim to let her husband, whom she identified as her brother, and her son to move in with them rent-free.

Less than a year after answering the ad, the Kauwes stole and spent more than \$40,000 from the victim's savings account and more than \$20,000 from his checking account.

In addition to stealing the money, Laura Kauwe deceitfully persuaded the victim to sign over his Hilo home and a vacant lot in Ainaloa. The real property is the subject of an ongoing civil suit aimed at returning the home and land to Mr. Chock.

A Hilo jury deliberated for nearly two days before rendering its guilty verdicts early Monday evening. The jury found Laura Kauwe guilty of three counts of Theft in the First Degree, and found Abraham Kauwe guilty of two counts of Theft in the First Degree. Each count is a Class B felony that carries a maximum ten-year prison term and a fine of \$25,000, and enhancements that potentially lengthen any prison term.

"This case should send a strong message to those who exploit the elderly and infirm for financial gain," Attorney General Mark Bennett said. "Law enforcement and the community at large will hold them accountable for their despicable deeds."

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