



ERIK NASARENKO
District Attorney

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San Diego Man Charged with 26 Felonies in Fraud Scheme

VENTURA, California – District Attorney Erik Nasarenko announced today that Worthey Tobe Smith, Jr. (DOB 10/26/37), of San Diego, has been charged with 26 felonies, including conspiracy, receiving stolen property, and money laundering. Smith is charged for his role in a fraudulent scheme in which more than \$1 million was stolen from a 94-year-old Ventura widow.

The investigation determined that in 2020, during a series of phone calls, an unidentified co-conspirator lured the victim into believing she had won a large grant, but she first needed to contribute money before it could fund. It is alleged that Smith, while working with the co-conspirator, obtained 24 checks from the victim totaling \$1,140,000. Smith then negotiated 22 of those checks, converting \$1 million of the funds into cashier's checks that he sent to another co-conspirator in Michigan. Smith also obtained a debit card linked to the victim's account that he used to steal more than \$15,000 through unauthorized ATM withdrawals.

“Our office is grateful to the Ventura Police Department for their investigative efforts in this alleged elder fraud case,” said District Attorney Erik Nasarenko. “Our prosecutors will continue to work with law enforcement and victims to charge appropriate felonies that target our vulnerable residents.”

Smith was arrested on April 12, 2022, following an investigation by the Ventura Police Department. On April 18, 2022, Smith was arraigned in Ventura County Superior Court and pled not guilty. A bail review hearing is scheduled for April 20, 2022, at 1:30 p.m. in courtroom 13, and an early disposition conference is scheduled for April 27, 2022, at 1:30 p.m. in courtroom 12. Smith is currently in custody at the Ventura County Jail with bail set at \$500,000.

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The Ventura County District Attorney's Office is the public prosecutor for the county's 850,000 residents. The office employs approximately 290 employees including attorneys, investigators, victim advocates, and

professional support staff who strive to seek justice, ensure public safety, and protect the rights of crime victims.