



ERIK NASARENKO
District Attorney

NEWS RELEASE

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Money Mule Sentenced for Laundering \$1 Million Stolen from Elder

VENTURA, California – District Attorney Erik Nasarenko announced today that Worthey Tobe Smith (DOB 10/26/37), of San Diego, was sentenced to six years felony jail and ordered to pay restitution for his role as a “money mule” in a scam resulting in the theft of more than \$1 million from an elderly Ventura widow. On July 13, 2022, Smith pled guilty to 13 felonies including conspiracy, receiving stolen property, and money laundering. The case resulted from an investigation by the Ventura Police Department.

In 2020 and 2021, during a series of phone calls that spanned a year, an unidentified co-conspirator lured the victim into believing she won a large grant but needed to contribute money before it could fund. While acting as the co-conspirator’s “agent,” Smith obtained 30 checks from the victim totaling \$1,420,000. Smith then laundered 22 of those checks totaling \$1,060,000, by converting most of them into cashier’s checks. Smith then passed the cashier’s checks on to another money mule in Michigan. Smith also stole \$15,400 from the victim’s bank account through unauthorized ATM withdrawals.

District Attorney Erik Nasarenko said, “Scammers behind frauds like this are highly skilled in conning elders over the phone. We all need to educate our loved ones about these scams to protect them from potential financial ruin and criminal schemes.”

Smith has been in custody since his arrest on April 12, 2022. He will remain in the Ventura County Jail to serve the first two years of his sentence. Once he is released from custody, he will be placed on mandatory supervision to serve the remaining four years of his sentence.

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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.