

March 9, 2022

ATTORNEY GENERAL RAOUL: ACCOUNTANT SENTENCED AFTER STEALING HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS FROM CLIENT

Chicago — Attorney General Kwame Raoul today announced a former accountant was ordered to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars in restitution for stealing from a client.

Thomas Errico, 81, of Highland Park, Illinois, was a partner at Anspach, Errico & Co. in Highland Park when he allegedly stole from clients who hired him to prepare and file their tax returns. Errico pleaded guilty in August 2021 to stealing from an older client and was sentenced by Lake County Circuit Court Judge Mark Levitt to 36 months of probation with periodic imprisonment – which means he may leave the Lake County Jail only for employment or medical reasons. Errico was also ordered to pay \$330,000 in restitution.

“When people hire an accountant to prepare their annual tax returns, they are trusting that individual to ensure that filings are accurate and meet state and federal government requirements,” Raoul said. “I will continue to ensure that accountants and tax preparers who lie to or steal from clients are held accountable for their actions.”

The Attorney General’s office charged Errico, a former certified public accountant, with theft after he stole approximately \$330,000 from 86-year-old Terry Lillie. Errico was Lillie’s accountant for several years and was hired to prepare and file Lillie’s annual tax returns. However, Errico either failed to file or filed incorrect tax returns for tax years 2013, 2014 and 2015. This came to light when Lillie’s nephew noticed a discrepancy while reviewing Lillie’s bank records and found that Lillie, who is developmentally disabled, issued more than 30 checks totaling approximately \$343,000 to Errico’s accounting firm between 2012 and 2016. Raoul’s office alleged that of those payments, Errico remitted only around \$9,700 to the government and stole the rest.

Errico’s sentencing comes in the midst of tax season, and Attorney General Raoul recommends that consumers avoid preparers who:

- Fail or refuse to provide access to their electronic documents.
- Ask you to sign a blank or incomplete tax form.
- Offer to e-file a tax return using a pay stub instead of a federal W-2 form. Doing so is a violation of IRS e-file rules.
- Base preparation fees on a percentage of the tax refund. You should obtain the full cost of tax preparation services before signing a contract, and pay up-front if you are able to do so.
- Guarantee bigger refunds than their competition. Scam preparers often mislead consumers into taking deductions they are not entitled to claim. They also invent income that erroneously qualifies consumers for tax credits.
- Require payments in cash only and do not provide a receipt.
- Direct refunds into the preparer’s bank accounts.
- Mark returns as “self-prepared,” or affix a business label rather than sign the form by name.
- Refuse or fail to provide a Preparer Tax Identification Number (PTIN). Anyone paid to prepare or assist in preparing federal tax returns is required by law to have a valid PTIN. Visit the IRS’ [online directory of federal tax return preparers](#) to verify preparers’ credentials.

Bureau Chief John Greenwood and Assistant Attorney General Regina Jeon handled the case for Raoul’s Special Prosecutions Bureau.

