NEWS

United States Attorney Jenny A. Durkan
Western District Of Washington

Former Bookkeeper Sentenced To Prison For Embezzling More Than $450,000 From Judges' Association

Olympia Woman Forged Signatures on Checks for Her Personal Expenses

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BARBARA JO ERICSSON, aka BARBARA JO FULTON, 56, of West Olympia, Washington, was sentenced today in U.S. District Court in Tacoma to 24 months in prison, five years of supervised release and $451,909 in restitution for bank fraud. For nearly 20 years ERICSSON (who recently changed her name from FULTON) served as the bookkeeper for the Washington State Superior Court Judges Association (SCJA). Over seven years ERICSSON forged 136 checks embezzling $451,909 from SCJA. The Association is supported by dues paid by each Superior Court Judge. U.S. District Judge Ronald B. Leighton imposed the sentence.

According to records filed in the case, in the fall of 2009, a Kitsap County Judge first discovered discrepancies in SCJA's checking account at Key Bank. At the next trustees meeting in January 2010, ERICSSON was asked to prepare an accounting of income and expenses. In February 2010, the SCJA board decided to have an outside accounting firm review financial records. A review of the records provided by ERICSSON and provided by SCJA's bank revealed discrepancies totaling more than $94,000. The funds were missing from SCJA's bank account. A financial investigation by the Washington State Patrol and FBI revealed that ERICSSON had written 136 checks to pay her credit card bills, to her husband's business and to her son. ERICSSON forged various judges' signatures on the checks and then altered the records to make it appear the checks had been written for legitimate expenses.

In asking for a prison sentence, prosecutors wrote that ERICSSON had betrayed the trust of the Superior Court Judges, and then tried to cover it up. ERICSSON "did not stop embezzling until she was fired in late-April 2010. .... Further, (she) initially attempted to conceal her crime in March 2010 by creating a phony check register showing that the embezzled checks were made payable to legitimate payees. (She) then provided this phony check register to SCJA's Treasurer and its independent auditor...," prosecutors wrote in their sentencing memo.

The case was investigated by the Washington State Patrol and the FBI. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Lawrence Lincoln.

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