

Man sentenced to 12 years on numerous counts of fraud

(July 30, 2010, Akron) ... Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh announced today that Michael Bukuts, 46, of Akron, was sentenced by Judge Patricia Cosgrove to 12 years in prison on numerous counts of fraud and engaging in a pattern of corrupt activity. Restitution was ordered to the State of Ohio in the amount of \$114,023.83 and to the Ohio BWC in the amount of \$9,572.69.

On July 9, 2010, Bukuts pled guilty to Engaging in a Pattern of Corrupt Activity, a felony of the first degree, two counts of Passing Bad Checks, Telecommunications Fraud, Grand Theft, Forgery, Tampering with Records, Identification Fraud, and Theft from Elderly, all felonies of the third degree, and Failing to Remit to the State Tax Collected, a felony of the fourth degree.

In May 2009, a Hudson City resident found two unauthorized purchases on his credit card; one to an insurance agency and the other to a florist. Hudson police investigated and found that Bukuts made these purchases. Bukuts had numerous reports of fraudulent use of credit card use associated with DC LeClair Dry Cleaning, a company his mother purchased in 2006. In all, 71 victims were found in Hudson, Bath, North Canton, Akron and Fairlawn, most had losses in excess of \$300 and were elderly. Bukuts was stealing credit card information that he obtained from the dry cleaning business and using it to pay for his own purchases.

At the same time, the Ohio Department of Taxation and Bureau of Workers' Compensation found that DC LeClair had failed to remit state sales tax or pay for workers' compensation. During various periods, fraudulent checks were presented to these agencies in attempt to pay these obligations. Multiple checks over a two year span were returned due to insufficient funds or being counterfeit checks. It was Bukuts' responsibility at the dry cleaners to pay these obligations.

During the investigation, it was discovered that Bukuts and his mother were going to leave for Europe. On March 24, 2010 the State executed search warrants for DC LeClair's businesses in Akron and Brecksville and Michael Bukuts' residence. Bukuts was arrested and taken into custody that same day.

Bukuts previously spent three years in Federal Prison for embezzlement charges that included allegations that he embezzled up to \$4.3 Million from his employers, setting up Swiss Bank Accounts to funnel the proceeds. Upon his release from prison, his mother brought him in to her business to help him get back on his feet.