

Judge Sentences Franklin County Woman For Far-Reaching Fraud/Money Laundering Scheme

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ST. LOUIS – United States District Judge Audrey G. Fleissig sentenced Christen Diane Schulte to 80 months in prison today. The 35-year-old Washington, Missouri resident pleaded guilty, last year, to two counts of wire fraud, two counts of bank fraud and one count of money laundering.

Schulte was a former bookkeeper and office manager of a farm and trucking companies based in New Haven, Missouri. Between January 2018 and February 2020, Schulte knowingly and intentionally devised and executed a scheme to defraud, and to obtain moneys from, her former employer and others by means of material false and fraudulent

representations in that she, without the knowledge and authority of her former employer, diverted funds for her own personal use. The total loss from this scheme is approximately \$727,000.

As part of her scheme, Schulte fraudulently and without permission used the companies' credit cards for personal expenditures. Schulte also fraudulently caused American Express and FirstBank to issue her new credit cards in the names of the companies. Schulte fraudulently charged more than 1,800 transactions totaling more than \$532,000 on these credit cards. Schulte also forged the signatures of the owner and several employees of companies, on checks from several different bank accounts, including personal accounts of the employees. Several of these checks were made payable to Schulte, but some of them she made payable to the companies in order to conceal the lost funds related to her credit card scheme.

Other forged checks were drawn from a bank account held by the Berger Levee District of Franklin County, which is a taxpayer funded levee district responsible for creating flood control projects in Franklin County. Schulte forged the treasurer's signature of the Berger Levee District on checks she made payable to the companies in order to conceal the lost funds related to her credit card scheme. Schulte used the fraudulently obtained funds for her own personal gain, including purchasing jewelry, a travel trailer, vehicles, and vacation travel.

"White collar crime is not a victimless crime. The court sent a clear message during sentencing that the schemes undertaken by Schulte will not be tolerated," said U.S. Attorney Saylor A. Fleming. "The case was a cooperative effort by many law enforcement agencies, all working together to obtain justice for the many victims affected."

"Christen Schulte was caught and sentenced to prison yet again for defrauding others who trusted her," said Special Agent in Charge Richard Quinn of the FBI St. Louis Division. "The victim employer uncovered the theft after an internal audit before Schulte caused irreparable damage to the business. This case highlights the value of having robust internal controls."

The Federal Bureau of Investigation is investigating this case. Assistant U.S. Attorney Kyle T. Bateman is handling the case.