Attorney General Bill McCollum News Release

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Florida Law Firms Subpoenaed Over Foreclosure Filing Practices

TALLAHASSEE, FL – Attorney General Bill McCollum today announced his office has launched three new investigations into allegations of unfair and deceptive actions by Florida law firms handling foreclosure cases. The Attorney General's Economic Crimes Division is investigating whether improper documentation may have been created and filed with Florida courts to speed up foreclosure processes, potentially without the knowledge or consent of the homeowners involved.

The new investigations name The Law Offices of Marshall C. Watson, P.A.; Shapiro & Fishman, LLP; and the Law Offices of David J. Stern, P.A. The law firms were hired by loan servicers to begin foreclosure proceedings when consumers were in arrears on their mortgages.

Because many mortgages have been bought and sold by different institutions multiple times, key paperwork involved in the process to obtain foreclosure judgments is often missing. On numerous occasions, allegedly fabricated documents have been presented to the courts in foreclosure actions to obtain final judgments against homeowners. Thousands of final judgments of foreclosure against Florida homeowners may have been the result of the allegedly improper actions of the law firms under investigation.

The Attorney General's Office is also investigating whether the law firms have created affiliated companies outside the United States where the allegedly false documents are being prepared and then submitted to the law firms for use.

Subpoenas have been served on each of the law firms listed above, and the investigations are ongoing.