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East Meadow Attorney Charged With Stealing More Than \$100K from Three Victims *Heller faces 15 years in prison for thefts*

MINEOLA, NY - Nassau County District Attorney Kathleen Rice announced today that an East Meadow attorney has been arrested and charged with three felonies after three victims accused him of stealing more than \$100,000 of their money.

Craig Heller, 49, has been charged with for Grand Larceny in the Second Degree, Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, and Scheme to Defraud in the First Degree. He faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted. He is due back in court June 25.

Rice said that in June 2007, Heller was hired by a divorced couple to manage their debt consolidation. The ex-husband, of Bethpage, and ex-wife, of Seaford, each put \$10,000 into an escrow account for Heller to pay their bills. Each party also agreed to pay Heller a \$2,500 fee for his services. Heller soon received complaints from the ex-wife after she realized he was not paying off their debts. Heller agreed to repay both the \$20,000 with interest and a portion of the attorney's fee on Dec. 31, 2008. The money, however, was never repaid.

In a separate incident, Heller, acting as escrow agent, was hired in November 2007 to remit a settlement check for more than \$82,000 to the partial owner of a piece of Brooklyn property that was sold. The closing took place on April 18, 2008, but Heller never gave the victim, of Brooklyn, a check. He was ordered to pay the amount on Dec. 18, 2008, but failed to do so. As in the other case, Heller promised numerous times to pay his victim.

"Instead of performing the task he was hired for, this attorney robbed his victims blind," Rice said. "Attorneys are in positions of trust, and wearing a suit and tie while you steal doesn't make it any less egregious."

Assistant District Attorney Megan Gallagher of the DA's Government & Consumer Frauds Bureau is handling the case for the District Attorney's Office. The defendant is represented by Joseph Megale, Esq.

The charges are merely accusations and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

