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**FLUSHING MAN CHARGED WITH FILING FRAUDULENT COURT PAPERS
TO COLLECT FORECLOSURE SURPLUS**

Allegedly Forged Victim's Signature In Bid To Collect \$128,000

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown today announced that a Flushing man has been charged with second-degree attempted grand larceny, second-degree criminal possession of a forged instrument and other charges for allegedly forging the signature of a man whose home had been foreclosed on in an effort to collect the surplus that resulted from a sale of the house.

District Attorney Brown said, "The defendant is accused of trying to steal a large amount of money owed to the victim in this case – and then challenging the victim in court when the scheme was uncovered. This is yet another example of the importance of vigilantly rooting out and prosecuting the growing number of housing-related frauds we are facing in this county."

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Harry Coumnas, 50, of 25-25 126th Street in Flushing. The defendant is charged with second-degree attempted grand larceny, second-degree criminal possession of a forged instrument, first-degree falsifying business records and first-degree offering a false instrument for filing. The defendant faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted. He is presently awaiting arraignment in Queens Criminal Court.

District Attorney Brown said that, according to the charges, the complainant, Leonard Lum, was the owner of a property located at 73-20 32nd Avenue in Corona, Queens, which was foreclosed upon on March 21, 2003. As a result of the foreclosure, there was a surplus of \$128,044 owed to him as proceeds from the sale of his property through foreclosure action.

The District Attorney said that, on December 17, 2008, the complainant filed an action in Queens Supreme Court, civil term, located at 89-17 Sutphin Boulevard, to collect the surplus. On February 9, 2009, however, the defendant Harry Coumnas, of H.C. Sonic, Inc., allegedly filed a petition with the court in opposition of the complainant's action, claiming that the complainant had assigned rights to the defendant to collect the \$128,044 surplus in exchange for a payment of \$25,000.

The District Attorney further said that the defendant allegedly hired an attorney to file papers in an effort to collect the surplus, which included filing documents bearing the forged signatures of Leonard Lum and his wife, Betty Lum, purportedly assigning the surplus of \$128,044 to the defendant in exchange for \$25,000. According to the criminal complaint, the complainant never assigned the right to the surplus to the defendant and did not receive the sum of \$25,000 from the defendant.

The investigation was conducted by Sergeant John W. Kenna, of the District Attorney's Detective Bureau, under the supervision of Lieutenant Robert J. Burke and the overall supervision of Chief Lawrence J. Festa and Deputy Chief Albert D. Velardi.

Assistant District Attorney Mariana Zelig, of the District Attorney's Economic Crimes Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Gregory C. Pavlides, Bureau Chief, and Christina Hanophy, Deputy Bureau Chief, and the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney Peter A. Crusco and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney Linda M. Cantoni of the Investigations Division.

It should be noted that a criminal complaint is merely an accusation and that a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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Note to Editors: Press release e-version posted at www.queensda.org.