

## **Attorney General Bill McCollum News Release**

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### **Hillsborough County Broker Gets 10 Years in Prison for Mortgage Fraud** *~ Broker defrauded more than 20 victims out of approximately \$400,000 ~*

**TALLAHASSEE, FL – Attorney General Bill McCollum today announced that a Hillsborough County resident received a prison sentence of 10 years after pleading guilty to multiple counts of various types of fraud. Michael Danish was involved in a mortgage fraud scheme that victimized more than 20 individuals who were looking to use home mortgages to purchase air conditioning systems. In addition to his prison sentence, Danish must serve 20 years of probation for the case prosecuted by the Attorney General’s Office of Statewide Prosecution.**

**Investigators with the Florida Department of Financial Services believe that from March 2002 through May 2004, Danish acted as a mortgage broker for a local air conditioner salesman who would locate the interested homeowners and refer them for financing to Danish. Danish closed the loans through Bay Point Title, Inc., owned by co-defendant Donna Whitlock. Whitlock allowed Danish to close loans outside of her office and notarized the signatures without the signees being present. The scheme primarily targeted senior citizens.**

**According to the investigation, Danish frequently obtained mortgages in amounts exceeding the homeowners’ requests, even obtaining some loans of which the homeowners were completely unaware. He also collected third-party checks which were required to be paid out of the loan proceeds and converted the funds to his own use, leaving many homeowners' bills unpaid. Danish fraudulently obtained over \$400,000 from more than 20 victims, many of whom were senior citizens. He was arrested by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement in February 2007.**

**Danish pleaded guilty in November to aggravated white collar crime, failure to disburse funds in accordance with agreements and notary fraud. His sentence was handed down today in Hillsborough County by Circuit Judge Mark Wolfe. Whitlock pleaded guilty to one count of notary fraud in August 2007 and was sentenced today to probation. She will also be held jointly and severally liable for the restitution with Danish.**