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PRESS RELEASE

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D.A. DONOVAN: TWO FORMER S.I. RESIDENTS ACCUSED OF \$1 MILLION REAL ESTATE TITLE FRAUD, TAX EVASION

******Joseph DeVito, 39, & Mary Ann Palladino-DeVito, 41, Accused of Embezzling Over \$1 Million from Customers & Title Insurance Company, Face up to 25 Years in Prison******

STATEN ISLAND, NY – Richmond County District Attorney Daniel M. Donovan, Jr. today announced that Joseph DeVito (DOB: 2/20/1970) and his wife, Mary Ann Palladino-DeVito (DOB: 3/24/1968), former residents of Staten Island now residing in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania have been arraigned on an indictment alleging that from 2002-2004 they embezzled over \$1 million from homeowners seeking to clear titles, as well as their franchise's parent company. The defendants are also accused of failing to pay personal income tax to the State of New York for the tax years of 2002 through 2004.

The defendants, who formerly resided on Kramer Street, Staten Island are accused of a top count of Grand Larceny in the 1st Degree, a Class B felony, punishable by a maximum penalty of up to 25 years in prison.

District Attorney Donovan stated, "As part of this mortgage fraud scheme, these defendants are alleged to have victimized new homeowners and their franchiser by accepting payment for mortgage fees, mortgage taxes, customer fees, real property filing fees, and escrow account funds and then misappropriating the funds for their own purposes. They are also alleged to have failed to file any tax returns to the State of the New York, depriving our state of essential funds for services such as healthcare and education."

The District Attorney further stated that the defendants were franchisees of Fidelity National Title, a Jacksonville, Florida based title insurance company. The defendant's operated their business from an office suite located at 1100 South Avenue, Staten Island.

The defendants arrested Tuesday in Pennsylvania and were arraigned on the charges today in State Supreme Court before Justice Leonard P. Rienza who ordered the defendants held on \$150,000 bail until their next court date on July 22, 2009. In addition to the top charge of Grand Larceny in the 1st Degree, the defendants are also charged with one count each of Repeated Failure to File Personal Income and Earning Taxes, a Class E felony.

The case against Joseph DeVito and Mary Ann Palladino-DeVito is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Om Kakani of the Investigations Bureau under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Mario F. Mattei, Bureau Chief. The investigation was conducted by Richmond County District Attorney's office forensic accountant Dominick Perrotta.

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Joseph DeVito and Mary Ann Palladino-DeVito are represented by Manuel Ortega, Esq. and Michael Harding, Esq, respectively.

The public is reminded than an indictment is merely an accusation, and that the defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

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