

PRESS RELEASE

Cromwell Attorney Pays \$2,500 Penalty to OSE for Referring Real Estate Business to Wife

January 6, 2009

The Enforcement Division of the Office of State Ethics (OSE) entered a consent order today with Attorney George V. Lawler, Jr. of Cromwell, CT, an independent contractor of the State at the time of the violation. Lawler paid a \$2,500 civil penalty for using his authority in a state contract to obtain financial gain for his spouse.

Specifically, Lawler was hired as an independent contractor by the State of Connecticut to serve as the committee of sale in a foreclosure matter in his hometown. In April 2007, following the foreclosure action, Lawler referred the defendants in the foreclosure to his wife, who purchased the property involved.

By referring real estate business to his spouse while operating under the authority of a state contract as a court committee, Lawler used his position to obtain financial gain for himself or a member of his immediate family in violation of Connecticut General Statutes § 1-86e(a)(1). This section specifically prohibits a person hired by the state as a consultant or independent contractor from using the authority provided to him under the contract to obtain such benefit.

Although Lawler operated with full disclosure of his wife's involvement to the court, and believed that such disclosure negated any conflict, he nonetheless violated the ethics code.

As part of the settlement, Lawler paid \$2,500 for violating the section of the Code noted above. In addition, he will neither accept nor pursue any contract with any state agency or department until on or after October 1, 2009. He was also previously penalized by the court in the amount of \$1,000 and voluntarily remained inactive from committee work pending resolution of this matter.

"A person does not have to receive money directly from the State in order to be bound by the Code of Ethics," said OSE Executive Director, Carol Carson. "If a contractor receives authority from the State, as a committee of the court does, the provisions of the Code not only apply, but will be appropriately enforced."

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