



## U. S. Department of Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
FRIDAY MARCH 6, 2009  
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### **CHICAGO BUSINESSMAN ACCUSED OF CHEATING INVESTORS OF \$2 MILLION IN SALES OF TAX CERTIFICATES ON DELINQUENT COOK COUNTY PARCELS**

CHICAGO – A Chicago businessman who engaged in acquiring properties in Cook County through the purchase of delinquent real estate taxes was arrested on federal fraud charges for allegedly cheating at least 41 victims, to whom he purported to sell interests in certain properties, of at least \$2 million. The defendant, **Robert Anthony Bryant**, was charged with mail fraud in a criminal complaint that was unsealed following his arrest late yesterday, Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois; Thomas P. Brady, Inspector-in-Charge of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service in Chicago; Robert D. Grant, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation; and Alvin Patton, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division in Chicago, announced today.

Bryant, also known as “Tony Bryant,” 52, appeared in Federal Court yesterday and remains in custody pending a detention hearing at 1:30 p.m. Monday before U.S. Magistrate Judge Geraldine Soat Brown. Agents also executed a search warrant yesterday at Bryant’s residence / business premises at 420-422 West Grand Ave., Chicago.

According to the complaint affidavit, Bryant began buying tax liens in Chicago in about 1991, and resold tax liens or tax certificates to clients. He created a business called Taxbiz, Inc., and bought and sold more than 6,000 tax certificates over 16 years. He also had businesses called Business, Inc., and Beautiful.com.

The charges allege that Bryant sold victim purchasers tax certificates associated with properties for which the buyer could obtain legal title. Bryant falsely represented to the victim purchasers that in the event circumstances arose that impaired their ability to obtain legal title to the properties – such as a property owner redeeming their property taxes within a redemption period, or the tax certificate being deemed a “Sale in Error” – Bryant would refund their purchase price with interest. In fact, Bryant allegedly knowingly sold victim purchasers worthless tax certificates, knowingly sold duplicate tax certificates to multiple victim purchasers for the same property, and/or knowingly refused to refund the victim purchasers’ money as he had promised if the property owner redeemed the tax certificate or if the sale of the tax certificate was declared a sale in error. Instead, Bryant used the victims’ funds for his own benefit, according to the complaint.

The government is being represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Michelle Nasser Weiss.

If convicted, Bryant faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison and a maximum fine of \$250,000, or the Court may impose an alternative fine totaling twice the loss to any victim or twice the gain to the defendant, whichever is greater. The Court, however, would determine the appropriate sentence to be imposed under the advisory United States Sentencing Guidelines.

The public is reminded that a complaint contains only charges and is not evidence of guilt. The defendant is presumed innocent and is entitled to a fair trial at which the government has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt

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