

November 15, 2019

**ATTORNEY GENERAL RAOUL ANNOUNCES WILL COUNTY TOBACCO STORE OPERATOR PLEADS
GUILTY TO TAX FRAUD**

Chicago — Attorney General Kwame Raoul today announced the former operator of a Will County tobacco store pleaded guilty to charges he defrauded the state of Illinois out of more than \$400,000 in sales taxes.

Mazen M. Nassar, 41, of Orland Park, pleaded guilty this week to charges of solicitation and filing a fraudulent sales tax return and was sentenced to two years in prison. Nassar was also ordered to pay \$204,000 in restitution to the Illinois Department of Revenue (IDOR) at the time of his plea. Nassar was taken into custody at the time of his plea and also ordered to pay additional court costs.

"Individuals who defraud the state will be held accountable for lining their pockets with money that should have been used to support the vital programs and services upon which Illinois families rely," Raoul said. "I am committed to continuing my office's partnership with the Department of Revenue and sending the message that stealing from the people of Illinois will not be tolerated."

The Attorney General's office charged Nassar in 2016 alleging that, while doing business as M&M Expo Inc., he underreported more than \$5.8 million in sales from Smokers Expo in Homer Glen. The Attorney General's office also alleged that between January 2011 and February 2014, Nassar underreported sales to the IDOR, defrauding the state out of more than \$465,000. Nassar pleaded guilty to one count of filing a fraudulent tax return.

Nassar's conviction this week is his second felony conviction in Illinois. Nassar was previously charged in 2012 for conspiring to purchase and possess contraband cigarettes that did not bear the state and local tax stamps required by law. He was later convicted and sentenced to 12 months in prison.

The case was investigated by the IDOR's Criminal Investigations Division.

"When businesses underreport revenue, it cheats legitimate taxpayers and undermines our tax system. Illinois taxpayers should trust that the Department of Revenue is working hard to protect them from tax fraud and ensure fairness," IDOR acting Director David Harris said. "I applaud the hard work of the Attorney General's Office and Illinois Department of Revenue's Criminal Investigation Division for their efforts."

Assistant Attorney General Alexis Overstreet handled the case for Raoul's Special Prosecutions Bureau.