

**August 20, 2019**

**ATTORNEY GENERAL RAOUL: JUDGE FINDS LOMBARD VETERANS CHARITY MISAPPROPRIATED FUNDS**

***Judge Enters Order Prohibiting Charity & Owners from Operating in Illinois***

**Chicago** — Attorney General Kwame Raoul today announced a Cook County judge entered an order prohibiting the Lombard-based charity Veterans Christian Network, Inc. (VCN) and its founders, Todd and Priscilla Olshefski, from engaging in future charitable activities in Illinois. The order resolves a lawsuit Raoul's office filed this spring against VCN and the Olshefskis over violations of Illinois charity laws.

Cook County Circuit Court Judge Pamela McLean Meyerson entered an order after the Olshefskis repeatedly failed to attend court proceedings in the lawsuit. The court order prohibits VCN from operating and prohibits the Olshefskis from fundraising or acting as fiduciaries of charitable assets in Illinois. They are also subject to a \$28,337 judgment after allegedly collecting that amount from donors and failing to use the money on programs benefitting veterans.

"I appreciate the court's decision to ensure the defendants are held accountable for their inexcusable actions that defrauded donors who believed they were supporting services to help the men and women who serve our country," Raoul said. "My office will continue to ensure that those who operate charitable organizations do so responsibly."

Raoul filed the lawsuit in March in Cook County Circuit Court against the Olshefskis and three other VCN directors. The lawsuit alleged the Olshefskis and the other directors, including Harlin Neal and Robert Atkinson, misused the charity's funds that were intended to support services for returning veterans. Both Neal and Atkinson were both previously prohibited from acting as fiduciaries of charitable assets.

According to Raoul's complaint, the Olshefskis formed VCN in March 2018, which is when they began soliciting donations to support programs for veterans returning from combat. Raoul alleged VCN failed to register with the Attorney General's office as required by law and failed to file the statutorily-required reports accounting for VCN's charitable activities. An investigation by Raoul's office found that of more than \$28,000 collected and deposited into a VCN bank account controlled by the Olshefskis, it was unclear whether any money was used for programs benefitting veterans. The lawsuit alleged that the Olshefskis withdrew at least \$10,000 as cash and spent it on items unrelated to VCN.

In addition to Raoul's lawsuit, Priscilla Olshefski pleaded guilty to charges of theft of charitable assets filed by DuPage County State's Attorney Robert Berlin. She was sentenced to serve 170 days in DuPage County Jail. Todd Olshefski has a criminal history involving fraud or theft and has a case pending related to this matter.

Bureau Chief Barry Goldberg, Deputy Bureau Chief General Kristin Louis, and Assistant Attorney General Pooja Shah are handling the case for Raoul's Charitable Trust Bureau.