



SIGTARP

Office of the Special Inspector General
For The Troubled Asset Relief Program

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FORMER OHIO COUPLE PLEAD GUILTY TO DEFRAUDING MORTGAGE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

A former Mount Vernon, Ohio couple pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court today to accepting federal mortgage assistance in Ohio while living in another state and renting the Ohio property to a tenant.

Christopher Lee Horn, 58, and Sondra Horn, 57, both of Richville, Minn., pleaded guilty to conspiring to defraud the United States Treasury Department's Troubled Asset Relief Program.

Part of the relief programs funds targeted aid to families in states hit hard by the 2008 economic and housing market downturn. The program provided state housing finance agencies funding to develop locally tailored foreclosure prevention solutions. In Ohio, the housing finance agency created "Save the Dream Ohio," a statewide program focused on unemployed and underemployed homeowners at risk of mortgage loan default or foreclosure.

According to court documents, the Horns admitted to receiving more than \$14,000 in Save the Dream Ohio mortgage assistance funds to which they were not entitled.

In September 2014, the couple received more than \$2,800 in rescue payment assistance and was approved to receive 18 monthly mortgage assistance payments of \$692 each for their property at 18 Marion Street in Mount Vernon.

Also in September 2014, Christopher and Sondra Horn negotiated to rent their Marion Street residence to a tenant for \$655 per month. In later months, the amount increased. The couple requested the tenant pay his monthly rent in cash or personal check to a third party, who then deposited the money into a joint credit union account controlled by the Horns.

Each pleaded guilty to conspiring to commit theft of government property, a crime punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

"Today the defendants join 388 defendants convicted of crimes the Special Inspector General for the Troubled Asset Relief (SIGTARP) investigated," said Special Inspector General Christy Goldsmith Romero. "Christopher and Sondra Horn knowingly defrauded a TARP program that helps unemployed homeowners stay in their primary home. The Special Inspector General commends the Office of the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio for standing with SIGTARP to combat rescue fraud."

Congress sets the maximum statutory sentence. Sentencing of the defendants will be determined by the Court based on the advisory sentencing guidelines and other statutory factors.

David M. DeVillers, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio; and Special Inspector General Christy Goldsmith Romero, Troubled Asset Relief Program; announced the plea offered today before U.S. Magistrate Judge Norah McCann King. Assistant United States Attorney Sheila G. Lafferty is representing the United States in this case.

About SIGTARP

TARP's largest open program, the Home Affordable Modification Program (HAMP) pays TARP dollars to banks and other financial institutions to modify mortgages to make them affordable and sustainable for homeowners suffering hardships.

The Office of the Special Inspector General for the Troubled Asset Relief Program was created as an independent law enforcement agency to investigate fraud, waste, and abuse related to the TARP bailout. To date, SIGTARP investigations have resulted in the recovery of over \$11.2 billion, 388 criminal convictions and 305 defendants sentenced to prison.

To report a suspected crime related to TARP, call SIGTARP's Crime Tip Hotline: 1-877-SIG-2009 (1-877-744-2009). To receive alerts about reports, audits, media releases, and other SIGTARP news, sign up at www.SIGTARP.gov/pages/press.aspx. Follow SIGTARP on Twitter @SIGTARP.

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