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PIONEERING USE OF STATUTE RESTORES HOME
TO DEED FRAUD VICTIMS

Disabled Veteran and Family Get Home Back

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced that a house in St. Albans was returned to its rightful owners, a disabled veteran and his family, through the first-ever use of a state law enacted to protect deed fraud victims.

District Attorney Katz said: “This is the first time the law has been applied in New York State. The homeowner was wronged by a criminal scheme targeting the title of his family’s generational home for financial gain. The action taken by my Housing and Worker Protection Bureau spares this family the distress and delay of having to go to civil court to get the property deed back.”

In January 2023, Jasmine Morgan was convicted of filing a false deed for the St. Albans home on 198th Street and selling it without the owners’ knowledge or consent. One of the rightful owners, a disabled veteran, discovered the ruse when his son went to check on the property and found it was under construction.

After a hearing, Supreme Court Justice Jerry Iannece, who presided over Morgan’s conviction, granted a motion filed by the Queens District Attorney’s office to restore the property deed to its rightful owners.

New York State Criminal Procedure Law 420.45, enacted in August 2019, allows district attorneys to file a post-trial motion in Supreme Court on behalf of a victim when there is a conviction for offering a false instrument for filing in the first or second degree. By taking this action on their behalf, victims of real estate schemes are spared the burden of further legal proceedings in civil court to restore their property deeds.

“...[In] the communities that are targeted by deed fraud, most people do not have the money, or means to hire an attorney to file a civil suit and to litigate that suit against the deep pockets of mortgage companies, banks and title insurers that is customarily needed to bring such actions,” states the motion.

District Attorney Melinda Katz established the Housing and Worker Protection Bureau during her first year in office to focus on investigating and prosecuting crimes related to homeownership, predatory lending, wage theft and workplace safety.

Assistant District Attorney Christina Hanophy, Deputy Bureau Chief of the Housing and Worker Protection Bureau filed the void ab initio motion under the supervision of Bureau Chief William Jorgenson and the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney of Investigations Gerard Brave.

If you or someone you know has been a victim of a housing scam or believe an employer is not providing a safe workplace or suspect another scheme related to a construction site or unfair wages, call our office at 718 286-6673.

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Note to Editors: Archived press releases are available at www.queensda.org.

