



West Virginia Offices of the Insurance Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRESS RELEASE

Sentencing for Insurance Fraud Case

CHARLESTON, WV — Four family members have been sentenced in an arson and insurance fraud scheme in West Virginia after a joint investigation by state and federal agencies.

The West Virginia Offices of the Insurance Commissioner, the United States Postal Inspection Service, and the West Virginia State Police investigated the case. The family members insured houses and contents for amounts exceeding their value, then intentionally burned the house to collect insurance proceeds.

James “Punkin” Lester was the last family member to be sentenced. He was sentenced to seventeen (17) years in prison and ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$506,618.57 and ordered to forfeit an additional \$120,000, for his conviction on twenty-three (23) separate felonies related to the scheme.

“Insurance fraud affects every West Virginian’s insurance premiums,” Insurance Commissioner Jim Dodrill said. “Our office is committed to investigating reported fraud and seeking the appropriate actions to eliminate fraudulent acts in our market.”

To report suspected insurance fraud, call the Offices of the Insurance Commissioner’s Fraud Division toll free at 1-800-779-6853.