



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
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**Woburn Newspaper Deliveryman Arraigned on Charges of
Stealing Customer Identities and Forging More than \$200k in Counterfeit Checks**

WOBURN— A Reading man has been indicted and arraigned on charges of identity fraud, forgery, larceny totaling more than \$200,000 and numerous other charges, Middlesex District Attorney Marian Ryan and Woburn Police Chief Robert Ferullo informed the public today.

Ikponmwosa Ogiugo, 22, of Reading, was arraigned in Middlesex Superior Court in Woburn on 23 counts relating to a complex larceny scheme, including charges of felony larceny, larceny on persons sixty years of age or older, forging and uttering counterfeit checks, filing fraudulent tax returns, money laundering, identity fraud, and being a common and notorious thief.

Middlesex Superior Court Clerk Magistrate Michael Sullivan ordered the defendant held on \$25,000 cash bail. If he posts bail, he is subject to GPS monitoring and home confinement, with release for some daylight hours in order to secure and maintain employment. A bail review was heard by Middlesex Superior Court Judge Kenneth Desmond who again ordered the bail at the same amount.

The defendant's next court date is August 2 for a pretrial conference.

"These are troubling allegations where the defendant would take advantage of long-time customers, many of them elderly, by using their personal banking information to create his own accounts to access their money," District Attorney Ryan said. "We allege that it is because these victims did everything right, and monitored their accounts, that the defendant's activities were ultimately discovered."

Authorities began an investigation in December 2012 after receiving complaints from some of the defendant's customers in Woburn who noticed that unauthorized checks were being passed through their bank accounts. That investigation allegedly unveiled a complex forgery and

larceny scheme wherein the defendant, who was employed during 2012 doing newspaper home delivery to residential customers in Woburn, would garner personal and bank account information from those customers which he then used to create counterfeit checks drawn on their bank accounts, totaling more than \$240,000.

Through their investigation, authorities learned that the defendant encouraged and received gratuities from subscribers for delivering their newspapers, especially during the holiday season. At least 16 of his subscribers, most of them elderly, gave the defendant a “tip” for his service in the form of a check. The defendant then allegedly incorporated the bank routing information and the individual bank account numbers into new computer-generated blank checks. With the personal information he garnered from the tip checks, he would also search on-line for additional identifying information, including social security numbers and mothers’ maiden names, to use to establish fraudulent accounts.

Allegedly, the defendant would send the counterfeit checks to individuals residing outside of Massachusetts, where they would be deposited in accounts in New Jersey, New York, Florida, Alabama and Washington State. It is believed that some of the payees of the counterfeit checks were duped into believing the checks were legitimate and, at the defendant’s urging, deposited them in their own personal bank account and then forwarded the proceeds via Western Union to recipients, designated by the defendant, residing in India.

In several instances, when victims learned that unauthorized checks were being submitted against their account, they would close the existing account and open a new account. Unaware of the defendant’s alleged involvement at that time, they would then issue a substitute gratuity check to the defendant since the old account had been closed. In this way, the defendant was in a position to create, and did create, more and more new counterfeit checks off the newly established account.

In addition to creating fraudulent accounts with customers’ personal banking information, the defendant also allegedly used that personal information to file false tax returns in the names of his Woburn newspaper route subscribers with the Massachusetts Department of Revenue and the IRS in 2012. On those returns, the defendant would indicate that the applicant was entitled to state and federal refunds as they had pre-paid a disproportionate amount of tax withholding relative to their actual income earned that year.

It is alleged that he would then direct the refund be directly deposited into a debit card account that he had set up in the name of his delivery customers as well as other residents who lived along his delivery route and residents of an elderly housing complex where his relatives were employed. Due to the detection systems in place, 54 fraudulent tax returns were intercepted by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue before the payouts were made. However, in three instances, bogus returns claiming tax refunds were paid by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue and in two instances, the IRS issued refunds based on bogus returns he filed. The amount of monies he obtained through his tax refund scheme totaled more than \$17,000. It is alleged that Ogiugo actually filed returns seeking refunds from the Massachusetts Department of Revenue and the IRS seeking more than \$200,000.

The case was investigated by the Woburn Police Department with the assistance of the U.S. Secret Service, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the IRS and the Massachusetts Department of Revenue.

These charges are allegations, and the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

The prosecutor assigned to handle this case is Assistant District Attorney Doug Cannon. The Victim Witness Advocate is Danielle DeMeo. The Digital Evidence Investigator is Melissa Marino. The Lead investigator is Woburn Detective Brian McManus.

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