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Former Lake Firefighter Must Repay \$45K Of Stolen Union Dues

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Florida - A former Lake County firefighter was recently ordered by a judge to repay \$45,000 for fraudulent spending of firefighter union dues. Kevin Chamberlain, a 44-year-old Ocala resident, was also sentenced to 10 years probation after pleading no contest to a felony charge of organized fraud.

Chamberlain had been treasurer for the local International Association of Fire Fighters from 1999 to 2011 and an investigation found he used union accounts on thousands of dollars of personal purchases, a county report said.

He had worked for the fire department for 22 years and retired as of April 2012, around the same time he was arrested for the fraud.

\$16K on debit card

However, fire administration officials said he had not been working since August 2011 because of an injury. He last worked as a firefighter in a station west of Lady Lake, officials said.

A year-long investigation had found debit and credit cards had been used for numerous purchases on eBay, Carnival Cruise Lines, Old Time Pottery, Walmart and Sam's Club.

An audit found a total of \$30,000 in financial discrepancies and unauthorized transactions, which included \$878 spent on a credit card and more than \$16,000 spent on a debit card, according to a report.

The money spent were union dues and did not involve taxpayer funds or donations to the union, officials said.

Judge: no job involving money

According to court records, Chamberlain pleaded no contest on Dec. 28 to the felony fraud charge and was ordered to pay restitution.

The judge also ordered that he not be allowed to hold a job that involves the handling of money.

He must complete 50 hours of community service and his probation can be ended early if he repays the money quickly and successfully completes the other terms of his probation, court records show.

Written by The Orlando Sentinel

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