



COUNTY OF YOLO
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
JEFF W. REISIG, DISTRICT ATTORNEY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: September 3, 2014 **Contact:** Jonathan Raven, Chief Deputy District Attorney
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Davis Attorney Sentenced for Felony Theft from Client

(Woodland, CA) – September 3, 2014- District Attorney Jeff Reisig announced today that on August 12, 2014, Yolo County Superior Court Judge Samuel McAdam sentenced Hal Wright, a 59 year-old Davis attorney, to three years felony probation and 180 days in the Yolo County jail for Grand Theft.

In 2010, the victim, a Davis resident, sustained a serious fall which required multiple surgeries. He hired Wright to represent him in a personal injury lawsuit. Wright also told the victim that he would file a medical malpractice suit. Wright did not file the lawsuit but instead took the \$390 filing fee check, scratched out "Sac Superior Court" and wrote his own name. He deposited the money in his own account and never filed the victim's medical malpractice case. Later, Wright forged the victim's signature on a Release of Liability form and settled the victim's personal injury case for \$40,000, far less than the monetary damages caused by the injury. Wright then forged the victim's signature on the settlement check, kept the money and never told the victim that the case settled. For the next two years, Wright continued telling the victim that the case was progressing through the court system, going as far as sending fake demands for information to the victim which he told the victim were from the insurance company.

The victim also hired Wright to represent the Davis Musical Theater Company in obtaining the proceeds from a will. Instead of turning the money over to the Davis Musical Theater Company, after Wright received the \$15,500 check, he forged the victim's signature and deposited it in his own account. He never informed the Davis Musical Theater Company that he received the money. It was not until early 2013, when the victim hired another attorney, that he learned Wright settled his personal injury case and pocketed the proceeds from that case and from the Davis Musical Theater Company.

District Attorney Reisig stated "Attorneys are ethically obligated to serve their client's best interests. In this case, Wright violated this trust as the victim's attorney and used it for his own personal financial benefit." Reisig continued, "Such actions undermine public trust in attorneys and undermine the entire judicial system."

The extensive investigation by the State Bar of California in this case allowed the Yolo County District Attorneys Office to obtain this felony conviction. California State Bar Communications Director Laura Ernde stated "Wright was stripped of his law license earlier this year after the State Bar of California's Office of Chief Trial Counsel initiated disciplinary proceedings." Wright is no longer eligible to practice law.

On October 7, 2014, Judge McAdam will schedule a court date to determine the amount of restitution Wright owes to the victim.

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