

ILLINOIS ATTORNEY GENERAL LISA MADIGAN

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**For Immediate Release**

**August 19, 2010**

**AG MADIGAN, DEPT. OF REVENUE ZERO IN ON GASOLINE TAX EVADERS**

*Aggressive Enforcement Effort Recovers \$12.7 Million for State of Illinois*

Chicago – Attorney General Lisa Madigan and the Illinois Department of Revenue announced a sales tax fraud investigation that has resulted in the recovery of \$12.7 million in unpaid gasoline sales taxes and the indictment of six gas station owners and operators for tax evasion.

The indictments, obtained last week in Cook, Peoria and Tazewell Counties are the first issued in an ongoing probe of businesses that are evading the payment of the taxes that they owe to the State of Illinois, resulting in the loss of millions of dollars in State revenue. Madigan’s Office and the Department of Revenue expect to seek charges against additional violators in the coming months.

“The indictments announced today, and our ongoing investigation, send a strong message to gas station owners: if you defraud the people of Illinois by not paying sales tax, you will be aggressively prosecuted,” said Attorney General Madigan. “In these very challenging economic times, we are committed to holding gas station owners accountable.”

“Our main objective is to obtain voluntary compliance but we will not back away from aggressive criminal enforcement if it is warranted. Honest taxpayers and business owners must know the state will pursue tax cheats,” said John Chambers, chief of Criminal Investigation, Illinois Department of Revenue.

Charged in the initial wave of indictments are:

Muzaffar Jameel, 47, Harwood Heights, IL - operates two gas stations: Mobil, 4000 N. Western Ave., Chicago, IL and Phillips 66, 6001 W. 35<sup>th</sup> Ave., Cicero, IL. He was charged with 14 counts of sales tax fraud for activity from November 2007 through December 2008.

Joy Chemmachel, 47, Skokie, IL - operates three gas stations: Hickory Hill Gas Depot, 8801 West 87<sup>th</sup> Street, Hickory Hills, IL; Dempster and Ozark Shell, 7736 W. Dempster, Morton Grove, IL; and Fullerton and Pulaski Shell, 3959 West Fullerton, Chicago, IL. She was charged with 19 counts of sales tax fraud for activity from November 2007 through May 2009.

John Kottoor, 54, Orland Park, IL and Joy Matthew Kottoor, 58, Morton Grove, IL - operate Stickney Shell, 3901 South Harlem, Stickney, IL. Each was charged with 10 counts of sales tax fraud for activity from November 2007 through September 2008.

Abdelmomen Abdallah, 33, Peoria, IL - operates Road Runner, 2412 N. Sheridan Road, Peoria, IL. He was charged with 16 counts of sales tax fraud for activity from November 2007 through February 2009.

Dineshbhai Patel, 57, Morton, IL - operates Shell, 2009 S. Main Street, Morton, IL. He is charged with 16 counts of sales tax fraud for activity from July 2007 through October 2009.

Gasoline sales are reported to the State of Illinois on a monthly basis. The criminal charges are based on each month in which the defendants allegedly reported false sales figures. Each count of sales tax fraud is a Class 3 Felony, which can carry a prison sentence of two to five years. In addition to criminal penalties, the court can order the defendants to pay to the State the unpaid sales tax as restitution.

The investigation, which began in 2008, has collected \$12.7 million from 66 gas station owners across the state. Much of the back sales tax was collected from gas station owners who had been offered an opportunity to participate in a voluntary disclosure compliance program in October 2009. The voluntary participation in the disclosure compliance program does not eliminate the State's ability to pursue criminal charges.

Bureau Chief Vincenzo Chimera, Supervisor Patrick Jennings, and Assistant Attorneys General Lori Jordan, Kristina Waldron, Kathleen Farrell, James Rustik and Gene Bian are handling the cases for Madigan's Special Prosecutions Bureau.