



OFFICE OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY  
COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS

ANITA ALVAREZ  
STATE'S ATTORNEY

69 WEST WASHINGTON ST.  
SUITE 3200  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60602

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## Press Release

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FOR INFORMATION:  
(312) 603-3423

### **Former City Worker Indicted For Theft of Tourism Funds**

*Chicago Inspector General's office exposes abuse of funds*

Today prosecutors announced the indictment of a former project administrator with the City of Chicago's Department Of Cultural Affairs for stealing \$20,000 that was intended to promote tourism according to the Office of Cook County State's Attorney Anita Alvarez.

Ming Liu, 38 of 2302 Shurt Circle in Urbana, IL, has been indicted on two counts of theft and one count each of official misconduct and forgery. If convicted she faces up to seven years in prison. Lui worked for the City of Chicago from 1997 through June 2006.

"Corruption and fraud at any level of government is outrageous and unacceptable," said Alvarez. "Employees who blatantly disregard the public's trust for their own gain will be prosecuted and held accountable."

The indictment alleges that Liu's work responsibilities with the Department of Cultural Affairs included performing accounting and banking functions for the Chicago Tourism Fund. Within that capacity, Liu had access to the fund's checking account.

In July 2008, the Inspector General's Office discovered a copy of a \$20,000 check and began investigating because the check's signature was inconsistent with others issued by the tourism fund. The evidence was forwarded to the Cook County State's Attorneys Office.

In August of 2004, Liu created a \$20,000 check from the fund's checking account payable to herself. Liu then altered the payee of the check in the Chicago Tourism Fund's electronic accounting system so that it appeared as if the check was payable to the United States Postal Service. Liu forged the signature of the Chicago Tourism Fund's executive director on the check, and then deposited the check into her personal checking account.

"The attention to detail by even one skilled investigator can uncover the loss of thousands of dollars, due to potential misconduct," said Chicago Inspector General David Hoffman. "At a time when all levels of government are facing budget deficits, every dollar counts, and this shows how important maintaining a watchful eye for waste and fraud truly is."

The majority of funding for the Chicago Tourism Fund comes from the City of Chicago, but it is also partially funded by private donations. As a practice, the City of Chicago reimburses the Chicago Tourism Fund for postal expenses.

State's Attorney Alvarez thanked City of Chicago Inspector General David Hoffman and his office for their investigation. She also thanked Assistant State's Attorney John Carey of the Financial Crimes Unit for his handling of the case.

Liu pled not guilty today in front of Judge Timothy Joyce who also set the defendant's bond at \$10,000.

Her next court date is September 14.

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