



News Release

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Wayzata Man Found Guilty of Felony Tax Crimes

Saint Paul – 53 year-old Michael Fitzgibbons of Wayzata was found guilty of ten felony and ten gross misdemeanor tax crimes, the Minnesota Department of Revenue announced today.

The Hennepin County Attorney's Office charged him in early 2010 when Fitzgibbons allegedly owed the state more than \$433,000.

"We're very pleased with the jury's verdict," said Hennepin County prosecutor Tom Fabel. "The successful prosecution of white collar crimes such as those committed by Mr. Fitzgibbons sends a powerful message that could alter the behavior of others who may not consider them serious offenses."

Fitzgibbons was found guilty of five felony counts for willfully failing to file income tax returns and five felony counts for willfully failing to remit taxes for tax years 2003 through 2007.

He was also found guilty of five gross misdemeanor counts for knowingly failing to file income tax returns and five gross misdemeanor counts for knowingly failing to remit taxes.

"This case is a reminder to everyone that no matter who you are and how much money you make, you have to file and pay your taxes," said Thomas Teale, the Minnesota Department of Revenue's Criminal Investigation Director.

Fitzgibbons admitted that he failed to file his income tax returns on time for tax years 2003 through 2007. His income for these years ranged from \$575,000 to \$3.7 million.

Fitzgibbons received letters from the Minnesota Department of Revenue in 2005 and 2008 stating that he had failed to file returns for tax years 2001 through 2004. He allegedly never responded to the letters.

In 2008, Fitzgibbons' tax preparer sent him several prepared tax returns along with a letter urging him to mail the returns as soon as possible. Fitzgibbons did not file the returns until he found out he was being criminally investigated.

Each felony is punishable by up to five years in prison, up to a \$10,000 fine, or both.

The Minnesota Department of Revenue has a 24-hour tip line for anyone who suspects an individual or business is violating tax laws, at (651) 297-5195 or 1-800-657-3500. Tipsters may remain anonymous and can also email the department at tax.fraud@state.mn.us. Last year,

citizen tips resulted in 88 percent of the department's criminal case referrals.

The Minnesota Department of Revenue is dedicated to enforcing tax laws, collecting no more and no less than taxpayers owe. It takes progressively stricter measures against taxpayers who demonstrate that they will not voluntarily meet their obligations.

Sentencing will be scheduled at a later date.

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