

United States Department of Justice

For Immediate Release

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Central District of California

Canadian Man Sentenced to Nine Years in Prison for Running Lottery Scam that Targeted Elderly Americans

LOS ANGELES—A resident of Vancouver, British Columbia was sentenced today to 108 months in federal prison for operating a fraudulent lottery scheme that targeted dozens of elderly Americans victims who lost at least \$600,000.

Henry Anekwu, 43, received the nine-year sentence from United States District Judge John F. Walter, who also ordered the defendant to pay \$510,840 in restitution to his victims.

During today's sentencing hearing, Judge Walter noted that Anekwu showed no remorse for his victims, who suffered "devastating consequences" as a result of Anekwu's fraudulent conduct.

Anekwu was convicted in April of 10 counts of mail fraud committed through telemarketing and six counts of wire fraud committed through telemarketing. Anekwu ran the lottery scheme out of two Canadian companies he owned, Platinum Award, Inc. and Capital Award, Inc. The evidence presented at his trial showed that Anekwu, from 1998 through 2003, employed telemarketers who contacted potential victims in the United States to falsely inform them they had won a lottery. Victims were advised that they were required to pay taxes or fees prior to collecting the lottery winnings. Victims wrote checks to the fraudulent lottery companies in amounts ranging from \$475 to \$60,000. "If a victim sent money, [Anekwu] or the telemarketers he employed would call the victim back over and over again, demanding more and more money, even encouraging the victims to borrow money and/or mortgage their homes," prosecutors wrote in their sentencing brief filed with the court. None of the 79 identified victims ever received any lottery winnings, and several victims lost their homes as a result of this scheme.

At today's hearing, Judge Walter said it was "painful" to listen to the trial testimony of victims, who were both financially and emotionally devastated by Anekwu's crimes.

Two years after he was indicted by a federal grand jury, Anekwu was arrested in Canada in 2005 by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Anekwu was extradited to the United States in December 2009 after the Supreme Court of Canada rejected his appeal of his extradition.

This case was investigated by the RCMP Project Emptor Task Force in Surrey, British Columbia. Members of the task force include the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the United States Postal Inspection Service, the Federal Trade Commission, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police - "E" Division Commercial Crime Section, the Canadian Competition Bureau, and the Consumer Protection BC (formerly the Business Practices and Consumer Protection Authority).