

PRESS RELEASE

FAMILIES SCAMMED FOR THOUSANDS BY TELEPHONE MAN

(Bonham, Texas—August 30, 2017) Carlos Alfonso Dominguez, 24, of Telephone, Texas, was sentenced today to serve 8 years in prison and pay a \$10,000 fine for theft by deception of more than \$30,000. In March, 2016, Officer Kaleb Hackney, who was with the Fannin County Sheriff's Office, investigated and arrested Dominguez for stealing nearly \$34,000 in cash from two families seeking legal assistance with their immigrant visa renewals.

During the investigation, Officer Hackney discovered Dominguez presented business cards and correspondence when he met with his victims, and he used contracts and other forms from an actual law firm that he altered and modified in order to convince his victims to hire him. Dominguez then led his victims to believe that he would file their visa renewal applications and expedite their approvals through a law firm and lawyer he did not work for. Dominguez, who insisted all payments be made in cash, bilked his victims out of \$33,995 before they discovered Dominguez's scam.

At trial, the victims—a restaurant cook and an assembly line worker and their wives—testified how convincing Dominguez was and how he was able to gain their trust through his false representations that he worked for a lawyer, and from the knowledge he portrayed regarding the visa renewal process. One victim testified, “He (Dominguez) was very convincing. He said he could do this for our families and that it would be faster. He really seemed to care. I really thought he was trying to help us. I even thought of him as a friend.”

Dominguez's victims finally became suspicious after months of payments and no proof that any visa applications had been filed. Each family contacted the lawyer who Dominguez claimed he worked for. The lawyer confirmed Dominguez did not work for her and that he never provided her with any paperwork or payments on their behalf. When the victims discovered this, they each contacted the Fannin County Sheriff's office. Dominguez eventually admitted to his victims and to Officer Hackney that the entire affair was a scam.

Despite his admissions, Dominguez took the case to trial where his attorney argued her client had worked for the attorney in the past and that he had accepted the victims' money on the attorney's behalf. The defense urged to the jurors to place blame on the attorney and not Dominguez.

Assistant District Attorney, Don Hoover, showed the jury that Dominguez had once hired the attorney he claimed he worked for on his own immigration case, but that Dominguez did not work for the attorney in 2015 when he stole from the victims. Hoover also showed how Dominguez confessed to Officer Hackney and one victim over the phone and to one victim through Facebook that he had scammed his victims. Dominguez even admitted to Hackney that he had been running the scam for “a long time.”

The prosecutor showed the jury there was no evidence that anyone else was involved in perpetuating the scam. Hoover emphasized how Dominguez accepted full responsibility for the deceptions and thefts in his confessions and that Dominguez never stated or implied anyone else was involved.

The jury deliberated for just 14 minutes before returning a unanimous verdict of guilty against Dominguez. Dominguez faced from 2 years to 10 years in prison and up to a \$10,000 fine.

During the punishment phase, the prosecutor asked the jury to send Dominguez to prison even though he was eligible for probation. The jurors heard testimony from the victims as they described how Dominguez and his scam caused economic and emotional hardship to their families and how he had prevented them from renewing their visa applications as they were required by law.

Dominguez testified and asked the jury for probation. In his teary testimony, Dominguez placed blame on the immigration attorney he claimed he worked for. He also claimed that any wrongdoing he committed was because his mother was sick and that he used the money to pay her medical bills. Dominguez also promised the jury that he would repay the money to the victims.

On cross examination, Dominguez admitted that he had made many promises and lied on many occasions to his victims as he stole their money time and time again. Dominguez also admitted that he had never before taken any action to return any money to his victims, and that he promised to return the money to his victims for the first time at trial because he faced prison time. Hoover pointed out to Dominguez that he could not have worked for the attorney as he claimed, since the attorney had stopped practicing law months before Dominguez sought out and scammed the two families. Hoover further showed Dominguez was not a United States Citizen and that he would never be able to repay his victims as his theft conviction would see him deported back to Mexico.

It took the jury approximately 40 minutes to deliberate and determine Dominguez was not worthy of probation. The jury sentenced Dominguez to 8 years in prison and to pay a \$10,000 fine.

Don Hoover stated, "The Defendant got what he deserved. The jury saw the victims are good, hardworking people. They gave Dominguez their trust, their confidence, and their hard earned money to do what he promised them he would do. The jurors saw it. Dominguez acted alone as he sat in these families' homes, looked them in the eyes made them promises and later coldly betrayed their trust. The effect on these families has been devastating. At least they can take comfort that Dominguez won't be able to scam anyone else in this community."

In addition to his sentence, Dominguez will be ordered to pay full restitution to the families.