

# ***NEWS RELEASE***

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## ***OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA***

*San Diego, California*

*United States Attorney  
Karen P. Hewitt*

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*For Immediate Release*

### **Former Principals of Bankrupt Commercial Money Center Plead Guilty to \$70 Million Bank Fraud Conspiracy and Tax Evasion Charges**

#### **NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY -**

United States Attorney Karen P. Hewitt announced that Sterling Wayne Pirtle and Ronald Allen Fisher, the former principals at a now-bankrupt company they operated, Commercial Money Center ("CMC"), each pled guilty to two counts in an indictment: one count of conspiracy to commit bank fraud and one count of tax evasion. The guilty pleas occurred today before the Honorable Thomas J. Whelan in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California. The defendants admitted that they engaged in a scheme through CMC that involved the sale of pools of fraudulent sub-prime equipment leases to financial institutions. According to the plea agreements, the defendants included \$70,000,000 worth of fraudulent leases in the pools they sold to the financial institutions. Before it declared bankruptcy, CMC obtained over \$300,000,000 from financial institutions through its sale of sub-prime equipment lease pools. The tax evasion charges stem from unreported income each defendant earned at CMC. Both defendants admitted that they evaded payment of approximately \$1,000,000 each in personal income taxes on the millions of dollars they received from CMC.

Prior to today's guilty pleas, defendant Mark Edward Fisher entered a guilty plea on March 23, 2009 to one count of conspiracy to commit bank fraud and one count of tax evasion. In his plea agreement, Mark Fisher admitted his role in the bank fraud conspiracy and that he evaded payment of approximately \$500,000 in personal taxes on nearly \$2 million in unreported income from CMC. Kelly Fisher previously pled guilty to one count of tax evasion in June 2007 and was sentenced to prison that same year.

Sentencing for defendants Sterling Wayne Pirtle and Ronald Fisher is scheduled for November 23, 2009, before the Honorable Thomas J. Whelan. Mark Fisher's sentencing is scheduled for November 30, 2009.

**DEFENDANTS**

**Case number: 06CR1806-W**

Sterling Wayne Pirtle	Age: 72
Ronald Allen Fisher	Age: 68
Mark Edward Fisher	Age: 40
Kelly Fisher	Age: 34

**SUMMARY OF CHARGES**

Title 18, United States Code, Section 371 (Conspiracy)  
Maximum penalties: Five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

Title 26, United States Code Section 7201 (Tax Evasion)  
Maximum penalties: Five years in prison and a \$100,000 fine.

**AGENCIES**

Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation