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Elderly neighbor testifies in fraud case against RASCO CEO Richard A. Short

By [Kristin Longley](#) | [Flint Journal](#)
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Jeffrey LaMonde | The Flint Journal

Richard Short peers over to look at documents being submitted to the court on Tuesday during his preliminary hearing for felony embezzlement in 67th District Court.

FLINT, Michigan — A female friend of Richard A. Short was arrested Thursday on suspicion of perjury after testifying in the felony fraud case against him.

The arrest came shortly before other witnesses testified that they never signed a document that appeared to give Short power of attorney over his elderly neighbor — even though their names were on the paper.

Short, 57, is **charged with 24 counts of felony fraud** in connection with his 87-year-old neighbor with dementia, who lived near the Flint Township home where Short stayed while he was out on parole after serving time for a prior embezzlement conviction.

The home was also the registered office of Short's business, Renewable and Sustainable Cos. (RASCO), which **garnered statewide attention and snagged a \$9.1 million tax break** — before embarrassed state officials learned of his criminal past and rescinded the credits.

Appearing at times confused or distressed, the elderly neighbor testified that Short is an "honest, good man" who fixed her car and cooked her biscuits and gravy — and would never steal from her.

But authorities say Short illegally obtained power of attorney over her and fraudulently used her bank card to steal thousands of dollars from her.

Thursday marked the second day of **testimony in Short's preliminary exam**, after which Central District Judge Christopher Odette is expected to determine whether there is enough evidence to send Short to trial on the fraud charges.

Testimony is expected to continue this morning.

Genesee County Sheriff Robert Pickell said the woman who was arrested lied on the stand when she said she witnessed the elderly woman sign over power of attorney to Short.

The woman told the court that Short took care of the elderly woman and that he sometimes did her banking.

The woman was arrested outside the courtroom shortly after she finished testifying and taken to the Genesee County Jail.

Pickell declined to give further details, but said investigators will seek a warrant for perjury charges.

The Genesee County Prosecutor's Office is reviewing the issue, officials said.

Much of Thursday's testimony in the fraud case revolved around a document dated Sept. 16, 2009, that Short claimed gave him power of attorney over the neighbor.

The signature of Mariene Stone, a former deputy clerk for the city of Flushing, appears on the document with a notary stamp.

But Stone testified that she retired from the city in 2008 and didn't witness or notarize documents after that. She said it looked like her signature, but wasn't authentic.

"I believe it to be a copy of my signature," she said.

On several occasions, Short acted as a legal representative for the elderly woman, according to testimony. But one witness testified that the woman's court-appointed conservator is the only person who would be able to approve such a document.

The signature of the elderly woman's husband also appears on the document. He testified today that he did not recall ever signing it.

The elderly woman also did not remember signing the document, although she at times appeared disoriented and said she believed the date Thursday to be April 1930.

She appeared happy to see Short, who was smiling at her during her testimony.

She said she treated Short like a son and trusted him. She was hurt that someone would accuse Short of stealing from her.

She said she sometimes loaned him money, including for a "mayor's party" at Blackstone's Pub in Flint.

Upon questioning from the judge, she could not remember ever loaning Short money for a plane ticket or to shop at Macy's department store.

"If I did anything to hurt him, I'm sorry," she said. "He never took anything from me. I gave it to him. He took good care of me."

Short's attorney, Anthony Vance, said the woman's confusion makes it easy for someone to point a finger at Short.

"There's a fine line whether someone's helping her out or taking advantage of her," he said. "It's our position he was helping her out."

Journal staff writer Laura Angus contributed to this story.