



## U. S. Department of Justice

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### **FORMER CHICAGO AREA MAN CONVICTED OF FAILING TO PAY MORE THAN \$65,000 IN CHILD SUPPORT ORDERED IN DUPAGE COUNTY**

CHICAGO – A former Chicago area man was convicted of failing to pay more than \$65,000 in child support over more than a decade in what is believed to be the first such criminal case tried before a jury in Federal Court in Chicago, federal law enforcement officials said today. The defendant, **Maurice Bell**, 43, of Avondale, Ariz., and formerly of the Chicago area, was found guilty yesterday of one count of willfully failing to pay child support ordered in DuPage County for his now 13-year-old son, announced Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, and Lamont Pugh, Special Agent-in-Charge of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General in Chicago.

Previous child support criminal cases brought in Federal Court here have resulted in guilty pleas, while this is believed to be the first such trial. Federal authorities said they continue to actively investigate similar cases referred by the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services in which children and non-paying parents reside in different states and to pursue federal prosecution in appropriate cases.

Bell remains free on bond pending sentencing, which was scheduled for May 6 before U.S. District Judge Matthew Kennelly. Bell faces a maximum sentence of two years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

According to evidence presented at the three-day trial, Bell, who has been regularly employed by various mortgage companies and luxury auto dealers, has never made a voluntary payment under a child support order. Beginning with an administrative order in 1996 and a court order issued in 1999 in DuPage County, Bell has been obligated to pay \$520 a month in child support. However, between 1996 and 2007, he paid a total of less than \$25,000, all of which was garnished from his wages, resulting in an arrearage, plus interest, of \$65,319.

Evidence showed that at times during this period, Bell had income in excess of \$100,000 a year, and that between 2000 and 2006, he had available funds totaling more than \$372,000, including more than \$73,000 in gambling winnings. The testimony of four witnesses – three former girl friends and a golf partner – showed that Bell spent lavishly on luxury cars, clothes, shoes and golf.

The government is being represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Shoshana Gillers and Edward Kohler. The DuPage County State's Attorney's Office assisted in the case.

At sentencing, the Court will determine the appropriate sentence to be imposed under the advisory United States Sentencing Guidelines.

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