



Department of Justice

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Southern District of Mississippi

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2011
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RIDGELAND BUSINESS OWNERS APPEAR IN COURT ON FEDERAL CHARGES INVOLVING ILLEGAL ALIENS

Jackson, Miss. - Paul and Barbara Love of Ridgeland, Mississippi, appeared before U.S. Magistrate Judge Linda R. Anderson today for their arraignment on a multi-count indictment charging them and their company, Love Irrigation, Inc., with conspiracy, harboring illegal aliens, and encouraging illegal aliens to reside in the United States, U.S. Attorney John Dowdy announced. Paul and Barbara Love were also charged with improper use of Social Security numbers and making false statements on immigration forms. If convicted, Paul Love faces a maximum sentence of 30 years in prison and/or a \$1.25 million fine. Barbara Love faces a maximum sentence of 40 years in prison and/or a \$1.75 million fine. Love Irrigation, Inc. faces a maximum fine of \$1.5 million and up to five years probation. The trial is scheduled for January 9, 2012 before U.S. District Chief Judge Henry T. Wingate in Jackson.

According to the indictment, Love Irrigation is a lawn irrigation, sprinkler installation, and landscaping company located in Ridgeland, Mississippi. Paul and Barbara Love are the owners of Love Irrigation. From 2003 through 2010, the defendants employed, continued to employ and even re-hired illegal aliens, despite being told by certain aliens that they were illegal. In May 2008, Immigrations and Customs Enforcement ("ICE") visited Love Irrigation and instructed defendants Paul and Barbara Love on how to properly complete Forms I-9, verify Social Security Numbers, and participate in the E-Verify program. Afterwards, ICE reviewed Love Irrigation's Forms I-9 and informed Paul and Barbara Love that seven employees were illegal and must be terminated. Rather than terminate these illegal alien employees, Love Irrigation, Paul Love and Barbara Love continued to employ them and took affirmative steps to hide such illegal alien employees from detection. The defendants thereafter classified these illegal alien employees as "contract labor" and ceased reporting them to the Mississippi Department of Employment Security ("MDES") as required by law. Further, the defendants stopped paying these illegal alien employees in check at the company offices and began paying them in cash at off-site locations. Crew supervisors were also instructed to pick up and drop off these illegal alien employees at covert locations other than the company offices in Ridgeland.

The indictment further alleges that, in 2010, Love Irrigation began resubmitting the names of its illegal alien employees to MDES, using the exact same names and Social Security numbers for some but using different Social Security numbers for others previously identified by ICE in 2008. Paul and Barbara Love also began falsifying Forms I-9 in 2010, listing false employment start dates for various illegal alien employees, while listing different Social Security

numbers from those used by the same illegal alien employees on Forms I-9 in the past and previously reported to the Mississippi Department of Employment Security. ICE executed a criminal search warrant on Love Irrigation's offices in Ridgeland in July 2010.

U.S. Attorney Dowdy commended the investigative efforts of the Special Agents of the Department of Homeland Security Investigations. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Mike Hurst.

Dowdy noted that, as in any criminal case, a person is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty. The charges filed merely contain allegations of criminal conduct.

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