

June 23, 2022

ATTORNEY GENERAL RAOUL: SPRINGFIELD RESTAURANT OPERATORS ARRAIGNED OVER ALLEGEDLY DEFRAUDING THE STATE OUT OF SALES TAX REVENUE

Chicago — Attorney General Kwame Raoul today announced that the operators of a Springfield restaurant were arraigned after the Attorney General's office alleged they defrauded the state out of more than \$100,000 in sales tax revenue.

Attorney General Raoul charged Amanda Paz, 42, and Nicolas Paz, 40, both of Springfield, with theft of government funds over \$100,000, a Class X felony, and sales tax evasion, a Class 1 felony. The Class X felony is punishable by up to six to 30 years in prison. The defendants pleaded not guilty at the arraignment, and their next court date is set for August 22.

Amanda and Nicolas Paz operate AZ-T-CA Mexican Grill located at 2753 Chatham Road in Springfield. According to Raoul, both defendants participated in a scheme of collecting sales tax on all sales but underreporting monthly sales to the restaurant's accountant and, ultimately, to the state. The defendants then allegedly kept the unreported sales tax money.

"Business operators who commit sales tax fraud take advantage of customers who have paid to help them meet their tax obligations and also deprive important programs and services of needed revenue," Raoul said. "I appreciate the continued partnership of the Illinois Department of Revenue as we seek to hold these individuals accountable."

The investigation was conducted by the Illinois Department of Revenue's Criminal Investigation Division through an initiative targeting sales tax evasion and theft of government funds. According to the investigation, Amanda and Nicolas Paz provided false sales tax information to the restaurant's accountants from January of 2015 to October of 2019. The defendants allegedly defrauded the state of Illinois out of more than \$100,000 by underreporting more than \$1 million in total sales generated from the restaurant.

"Sales tax fraud robs the public of needed revenue and hurts legitimate businesses. The Illinois Department of Revenue remains vigilant to those who try to break the law and avoid paying required taxes," said Department of Revenue Director David Harris. "We will continue to work hard to ensure that all businesses pay their fair share. I congratulate our Bureau of Criminal Investigations and the Attorney General's Office for their hard work."

The public is reminded the defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

Assistant Attorney General Mansoor Broachwala is handling the case for Raoul's Special Prosecutions Bureau.