

Arizona Attorney Took Dead Man's Social Security Money



Summary: A Nogales, Arizona man was sentenced to two years of probation for taking Social Security benefits out of a man's bank account who had passed away years before.

A Nogales man, who also is a lawyer, was the co-signer on a man's bank account that would receive Social Security payments. When the man died, John A. Sedgwick kept pulling the money from the accounts. He was sentenced to two years of probation for taking the Social Security payments from the man's account, according to Nogales International.

Judge Thomas Fink of Santa Cruz County Superior Court also ordered Sedgwick to pay \$27,037 in restitution to the Social Security Administration. He must complete 40 hours of community service and attend a class called "Thinking for a Change." If, and when, Sedgwick successfully completes these terms to his sentence, his felony may be reclassified as a misdemeanor.

Sedgwick pleaded guilty to one count of theft. He explained in a letter to the judge that he met the man over 50 years ago when he came to Sedgwick's fathers' house to work. The man moved back to Costa Rica but asked Sedgwick to be a signer on his bank account. The man died in November of 2007.

Soon after the man died, Sedgwick realized that payments were still being deposited into the bank account from the Social Security Administration. He decided to take the payments, \$320 a month, and send them to the man's family and housekeeper until February 2012.

He wrote, "In April of 2014, I took the balance of \$7,850 out of the account for myself. I have thought long and hard about what I did and I am truly sorry for my behavior, which was illegal and wrong." Sedgwick was seeking a misdemeanor charge because "If I am convicted of a felony, I will have to resign from the many boards of the nonprofit groups that work so hard for the families of our community." Fink still opted to convict Sedgwick of a Class 6 undesignated felony. This means the conviction can be changed to a misdemeanor by Fink if Sedgwick complies with his sentence.

The court documents show that the Social Security Administration received a complaint about the account so an investigation was launched. They soon learned that Sedgwick was the cosigner on the bank account. When contacted, he claimed he did not know where the man was. The investigator explained to Sedgwick that it was a crime to take money from the account given the circumstances, Sedgwick then asked if it had been determined that the man was dead and then said he would be contacting his lawyer.

The probation officer who performed the pre-sentencing interview talked about Sedgwick's work as an attorney. He wrote, "He told me that he never thought he would be saying what all his clients would tell him in all his years of practicing law: 'Se me hizo fácil.' Translated in English, 'I thought it was easy.'"

Do you think Sedgwick should be removed from his board positions for his stealing money when he knew it was illegal? Tell us your thoughts in the comments below.

To learn more about Social Security benefits, read these articles:

- [Washington State Court System Hacked; About 160,000 Social Security Numbers Exposed](#)
- [Syracuse Lawyer Frauds Social Security Out of \\$250,000](#)
- [FBI Offering \\$20,000 For Info That Leads to Arrest of Social Security Lawyer Eric Conn](#)

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