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OFFICE OF THE
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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

AG Moody's Office of Statewide Prosecution Secures Eight-Year Sentence and \$500,000 Restitution Order for ORT Ringleader



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody's Office of Statewide Prosecution today secured an eight-year prison sentence and restitution order for the leader of an organized retail theft ring. Byron Johnson operated a theft ring in 15 counties, causing hundreds of thousands of dollars in losses to Home Depot stores. In addition to the prison sentence, Johnson is ordered to pay more than \$500,000 in restitution on charges of grand theft.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "This ringleader's organized theft operation spanned 15 counties in the state, causing losses of hundreds of thousands of dollars to Home Depot stores. Thanks to our Statewide Prosecutors, this criminal will now serve nearly a decade in prison and pay more than \$500,000 in restitution."

Earlier this year, Attorney General Moody's OSP, the Polk County Sheriff's Office and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement shut down the massive organized retail theft ring ran by Johnson. An investigation showed that Johnson and four other defendants went to Home Depot stores across the state, renting heavy equipment and destroying the attached GPS tracker in order to resell the stolen items online. The investigation showed at least 44 suspected thefts during the time frame of the investigation. To complete the scheme, defendants used stolen

identifications, as well as misled unsuspecting individuals to use the identifications, to complete the equipment rentals. The defendants sold most of the stolen items on Facebook Marketplace.

OSP charged Johnson with one count of grand theft, more than \$100,000, a first-degree felony; one count of scheme to defraud, a third-degree felony; nine counts of dealing in stolen property, all second-degree felonies; and unlawful possession of the personal identification information of another person, a third-degree felony.

Johnson will serve eight years in prison, followed by five years' probation, and pay \$539,360 in restitution.

OSP charged four other defendants with grand theft of varying amounts, ranging from first to third-degree felonies. These cases are still pending.

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