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Department of Justice
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Western District of Virginia

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Roanoke Woman Pleads Guilty to Failing to Disclose Ownership of Show Ponies as Part of Bankruptcy Proceedings

ROANOKE, Va. – A Roanoke woman, who failed to disclose her family’s ownership stakes in a series of show ponies as part a bankruptcy proceeding, pleaded guilty earlier this week in U.S. District Court. Acting United States Attorney Daniel P. Bubar made the announcement today.

Laura Wright, 52, pleaded guilty Tuesday to concealing property in relation to a bankruptcy proceeding. At sentencing, Wright faces a possible sentence of up to five years in prison and/or a fine of up to \$250,000.

According to court documents, on September 2, 2014, Laura Wright, and her husband Stacey Wright, filed a voluntary bankruptcy petition in the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Western District of Virginia in the Roanoke Division. At the time of the filing, Laura Wright was an attorney with prior bankruptcy experience and a member of the Virginia State Bar.

Prior to filing bankruptcy, and continuing throughout the bankruptcy proceedings, the Wrights incurred substantial expenses associated with the sport of pony jumping, an activity their then-minor child was participating in, and they bought, sold, and maintained ownership interests in several show ponies.

For example, approximately six weeks before filing bankruptcy, and after retaining bankruptcy counsel and completing a credit counseling course in anticipation of their bankruptcy filing, Laura Wright sold two show ponies for approximately \$15,000. In August 2014, Laura Wright and others traveled to Maryland where Laura Wright purchased a show pony for \$18,000. Laura Wright later bought and sold additional show ponies while the bankruptcy proceeding was pending. Although required to do so, the Wrights failed to disclose to the bankruptcy court any ownership interest in or costs associated with show ponies.

In the course of the bankruptcy proceeding, Laura Wright falsely testified under oath concerning her ownership interest in various show ponies, as well as the source of funds used to purchase the \$18,000 show pony in August 2014, just prior to the Wrights’ bankruptcy filing. She further provided a notarized affidavit to the bankruptcy trustee, knowing the affidavit to be materially false.

The matter was referred to the United States Attorney by the United States Trustee. The investigation of the case was conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation with substantial assistance from the Roanoke Office of the United States Trustee Program. Assistant United States Attorney Kristin B. Johnson and Anthony P. Giorno are prosecuting the case for the United States.