



Department of Justice

United States Attorney Kevin E. VanderSchel
Southern District of Iowa

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, June 23, 2016
<http://www.justice.gov/usao/ias>

CONTACT: Rachel J. Scherle
(515) 473-9300
Rachel.Scherle@usdoj.gov

West Des Moines Man Sentenced to 70 Years in Prison for Retail Theft Scheme, Child Pornography, and Witness Tampering Charges

DES MOINES, IA – On June 23, 2016, Bradley J. Prucha, 39, of West Des Moines, Iowa, was sentenced by Chief United States District Court Judge John A. Jarvey to a total of 840 months, or 70 years, in federal prison for executing a multistate retail theft scheme, producing and possessing child pornography, distributing Xanax to minors, and attempting to bribe minor witnesses to change their trial testimony, announced United States Attorney Kevin E. VanderSchel. Prucha was previously convicted by a Southern District of Iowa jury on March 1, 2016, on multiple counts, including conspiracy, mail fraud, production of child pornography, possession of child pornography, distribution of Xanax to persons under the age of twenty-one, and witness tampering. Prucha was ordered to serve a lifetime term of supervised release to follow his release from prison, pay restitution to the business victims, and \$1,900 to the Crime Victims' Fund.

Over the course of a six day jury trial, the government presented evidence showing Prucha was the leader of a retail theft scheme from at least October 2013 until his arrest on June 4, 2015. To execute his scheme, Prucha printed UPC bar code stickers, and then placed the stickers on items in stores so they would ring up at a lower price. He then returned the items to stores for their full price, or sold them online through eBay, Craigslist, or directly to bulk buyers. Prucha committed the thefts between Florida and Iowa, where he maintained separate residences,

and in Nebraska and Illinois. At trial, witnesses described how Prucha recruited adults and teenagers to place stickers on items, purchase them for the fraudulent price, and make the returns so as to avoid detection himself. At the time Prucha orchestrated and executed his retail bar coding scam, he was on probation for having committed a nearly identical bar code switching scheme in Florida. Prucha admitted to committing the bar code fraud scheme during his trial testimony.

The evidence at trial also established Prucha used teenage girls to commit thefts for him, and paid the girls to have sex with him using proceeds from the scheme as well as Xanax. One witness testified she committed thefts for Prucha starting as young as fifteen years old; multiple witnesses testified Prucha's nephew also committed thefts for him from an even younger age. At trial, the minor victims testified that Prucha gave them Xanax and money to have sexual relations with him. Prucha filmed three sexually explicit videos of himself engaged in sexual activity with minors. He maintained possession of the videos on his electronic devices and multiple witnesses testified that Prucha showed them the videos. Testimony and Prucha's own recorded statements played at trial, proved he threatened the victims with physical harm when one victim learned about the video of her (which had been taken without her knowledge) and threatened to tell the police.

A former inmate at the Polk County Jail testified that Prucha directed him to offer money to the minor witnesses for them to sign false affidavits, which would have contradicted their statements and the evidence in the case. Prucha provided the inmate, someone he knew was a convicted sex offender, with personal details about the minor witnesses, including hand-drawn maps to the girls' homes, their telephone numbers, details about their personal lives, names of family members, and the hours and location of their jobs.

“The evidence in this case showed Bradley Prucha is a dangerous predator who manipulated vulnerable teenage girls to commit fraud for him and to have sex with him by providing them Xanax, money and gifts, and through threats, intimidation, and emotional and mental manipulation,” said United States Attorney Kevin E. VanderSchel. “The significant term of incarceration Prucha will serve is appropriate and necessary to protect the public and other potential victims.”

At sentencing, Chief United States District Judge John A. Jarvey imposed a total sentence of 840 months. Prucha received the maximum term of imprisonment of five years as to the conspiracy count, 20 years as to six mail fraud counts, 20 years for possession of child pornography, and 10 years for the distribution of Xanax to persons under the age of twenty-one. He additionally was sentenced to 40 years imprisonment on each count of production of child pornography, a consecutive thirty years for committing those offenses while required to register as a sex offender, and 30 years for each of the four counts of witness tampering.

This matter was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, with assistance from the Asset Protections teams at various retailers, including Barnes & Noble, Walmart, Toys R Us, and Best Buy. The case was prosecuted by the United States Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of Iowa.

#####