



DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA

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**FORMER WAIĀKEA HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL COACH CHARGED WITH
FELONY THEFT**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 30, 2024

HONOLULU – The Department of the Attorney General has charged former Waiākea High School basketball coach Justin Alike Pekelo Smith, 48, with one count of Theft in the Second Degree and one count Negotiating a Worthless Negotiable Instrument.

As alleged in the charging document, Smith engaged a company to make hotel arrangements for a trip by the Waiākea High School boys' basketball team, the cost of which was \$3,788.75. Smith allegedly collected \$3,627.00 from the team members' parents and kept the money for himself. Smith allegedly paid the company only \$500.00 and intentionally gave a check for the remainder of the balance owed knowing it would not be honored. As alleged, the check was returned for insufficient funds and Smith never paid the company the remaining balance.

The case was investigated and charged by the Department of the Attorney General's Special Investigation and Prosecution Division. Smith was arrested by Hawai'i Police Department in the afternoon of August 29, 2024.

"The people of Hawai'i expect that their public servants to act with the honesty and integrity. When a public servant steals, the people's faith in government is undermined," said Acting Attorney General Matthew Dvorch, who is serving in that capacity while Attorney General Anne Lopez is out of state. "The Department of the Attorney General will prosecute all those who abuse their positions of trust."

Theft in the Second Degree is a Class C felony punishable by up to five years in prison and a fine not exceeding \$10,000. Negotiating a Worthless Negotiable Instrument is a misdemeanor punishable by up to one year imprisonment and a fine not exceeding \$2,000.

The case is *State v. Smith*, 3CPC-24-0000603. The prosecution is being handled by Deputy Attorney General Thomas Michener.

Smith is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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