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Southern District of Florida**

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**Jury Convicts Vero Beach Attorney of Conspiracy and
Making False Statements to a Federally Insured Institution**

On June 15, 2018, a federal jury in West Palm Beach, Florida, convicted Vero Beach attorney **Eric B. Granitur**, 60, of participating in a criminal conspiracy and making false statements to a federally insured institution.

Benjamin G. Greenberg, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida; Gavin Gumbinner, Resident Agent in Charge, Fort Pierce, Florida, Federal Bureau of Investigation, (FBI); and Edwin Bonano, Special Agent in Charge, Tampa, Florida, Federal Housing Finance Agency, Office of Inspector General (FHFA-OIG) made the announcement.

Granitur was convicted, at trial, of one count of conspiracy to commit the offense of making false statements to a federally insured institution, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 371; and two counts of making a false statement to a federally insured institution, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1014. Granitur's co-conspirators, George Heaton, Deborah Dentry Baggett, and Stephen McKenzie, have already pled guilty and are awaiting sentencing.

According to the evidence presented at trial, in 2009, Eric Granitur, a member of the Florida Bar, owned and operated Live Oak Title, which conducted two real estate closings for the purchase of five condominiums at the Vero Beach Hotel and Spa. The seller and developer of the Vero Beach Hotel and Spa, George Heaton, offered numerous incentives to buyer Stephen McKenzie to purchase the condominiums. Heaton agreed to pay the "cash-to-close" amount that the buyer McKenzie was expected to bring to closing. Additionally, Heaton paid for the closing costs and paid McKenzie additional incentives.

Granitur's title company, Live Oak Title, conducted the closings for the sales of the Vero Beach Hotel and Spa condominium units sold to buyer Stephen McKenzie. As an escrow agent, Granitur was required to truthfully and accurately prepare and distribute a settlement statement to the financial institutions, known as a "HUD-1," in preliminary form for review by the financial

institution, prior to the closing of escrow. The closing statement was required to accurately reflect, among other information, the sales price, the closing funds provided by the borrower and all of the seller's contributions. As an escrow agent, Granitur was responsible for receiving and holding in trust, in an escrow account, the mortgage loan proceeds from the financial institutions that financed the purchase of the condominium units, and he was responsible for disbursing those loan proceeds only after final approval by the financial institutions.

On two occasions, Granitur knowingly caused a false closing statement to be transmitted to a federally insured financial institution. The HUD-1 closing statements failed to truthfully disclose seller credits and incentives. Additionally, the closing statements failed to disclose that the seller was paying the buyer's "cash-to-close." The financial institutions relied upon the closing statement in authorizing the release of funds.

Sentencing will take place before United States District Judge Robin L. Rosenberg, in West Palm Beach. A sentencing date has not yet been set.

Mr. Greenberg commended the investigative efforts of the FBI and FHFA-OIG. This case is being prosecuted by Special Assistant United States Attorney Joseph A. Capone and Assistant United States Attorney Daniel E. Funk.

A copy of this press release may be found on the website of the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida at www.usdoj.gov/usao/fls. Related court documents and information may be found on the website of the District Court for the Southern District of Florida at www.flsd.uscourts.gov or on <http://pacer.flsd.uscourts.gov>.