



PRESS RELEASE

Attorney General Frosh Announces Guilty Plea and Sentencing of St. Mary's County Man for Felony Illegal Possession of a Rifle *Defendant Pleads Guilty in Two Cases, Sentenced to One Year in Jail*

BALTIMORE, MD (March 15, 2019) – Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh today announced two guilty pleas by Joseph Ross West, 29, of Mechanicsville for felony illegal possession of a rifle and false statement on a firearms application. In January, West pled guilty to the illegal possession charge, and Charles County Circuit Court Judge Amy J. Bragunier subsequently sentenced him to 15 years incarceration, suspending all but one year. Following a guilty plea in December, 2018 to the false statement charge, West was sentenced by Circuit Court for Baltimore County Judge Ruth Jakubowski to one year incarceration. The sentences will run concurrently. Upon release, West will be required to serve five years of supervised probation, to complete a jail-based treatment program, to not possess any firearms or drugs, to complete a substance abuse evaluation and any recommended treatment, and forfeit all firearms seized.

The investigation began with a firearms license application submitted by West. Despite a prior conviction for a crime of violence, West lied on the application and stated he had no prior record. While conducting a background check to review West's application, the Maryland State Police (MSP) Licensing Division spotted his prior conviction and denied his application. The case was then turned over to the MSP Criminal Enforcement Division for an investigation. Investigators with the State Police discovered that in addition to the false statement on the application, West had also recently pawned rifles and shotguns at pawn shops in Charles County. His prior crime of violence meant he was prohibited from possessing those rifles and shotguns as well. In conjunction with the Charles County Sheriff's Office, MSP investigators responded to the pawn shops and recovered the firearms.

"Mr. West knowingly lied on the license application," said Attorney General Frosh. "Attempting to cover up prior criminal history to purchase a handgun is a crime for which he has been held accountable."

The investigation was led by the Maryland Office of the Attorney General and the Maryland State Police (MSP) Gun Enforcement Section.

In making today's announcement, Attorney General Frosh thanked Organized Crime Chief Katie Dorian, MSP Lieutenant Jeffrey Jones, MSP Detective Sergeant Frank Lopez, Charles County Sheriff Troy Berry, and Assistant Attorney General Jared Albert, who prosecuted these

cases. Attorney General Frosh also thanked State's Attorney for Charles County Tony Covington and State's Attorney for Baltimore County Scott Shellenberger for their assistance in this prosecution.