

Dept. of Justice: Merrill woman sentenced to prison for making false statements during purchase of firearms

Posted on Friday, Mar 3, 2023

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MADISON, WIS. – Timothy M. O’Shea, United States Attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin, announced that Ashley Zastrow, 32, Merrill, Wisconsin was sentenced yesterday by U.S. District Judge William M. Conley to 1 year and 1 day in federal prison for making false statements during the purchase of two firearms. This prison term will be followed by a 3-year term of supervised release.

On January 13, 2022, Zastrow purchased two firearms in Wisconsin Rapids. In order to complete the purchase of these firearms, she represented that she was the actual buyer of these firearms when in fact she was not. An investigation by law enforcement revealed that she purchased these firearms for an individual who accompanied her to the store and provided her with cash at the time of purchase. This offense is known as a “straw purchase.” The person Zastrow provided the firearms is prohibited by law from possessing firearms as a result of previous felony convictions and allegedly used one of the firearms purchased by Zastrow to commit a homicide.

In sentencing Zastrow, Judge Conley stated that she made a “disastrous” choice to transfer firearms to a prohibited person and could not ignore the fact that this choice contributed to a woman’s death. Judge Conley also reasoned that a prison sentence was warranted given the defendant’s poor performance on pre-trial release and nominal efforts to confront her methamphetamine addiction.

This case has been brought as part of Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN), the U.S.

Justice Department's program to reduce violent crime. The PSN approach involves collaboration by federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, prosecutors and communities to prevent and deter gun violence.

The charge against Zastrow was the result of an investigation conducted by the Lincoln County Sheriff's Office, Merrill Police Department, and Federal Bureau of Investigation, with the assistance of the Marshfield Police Department. Assistant U.S. Attorney Taylor L. Kraus prosecuted this case.