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Two St. Louis County women admit to operating pyramid scheme; each ordered to pay civil penalty of \$10,000

Clayton, Mo. Two St. Louis County women admitted today in a court-approved consent judgment that they operated an illegal [pyramid scheme](#) known as The Original Dinner Party and were ordered by a judge to each pay a \$10,000 civil penalty. Attorney General Jay Nixon [sued](#) Barbara Bright (a/k/a Barbara Ann Horlick), of Webster Groves, and Cindy G. Mechura, of Kirkwood, in November 2000 for trying to induce other participants into the pyramid scheme.

St. Louis County Associate Circuit Judge Patrick Clifford also ordered Bright and Mechura to notify each person whom they contacted about the scheme and inform those people about the court judgment and also that the Original Dinner Party has been declared an unlawful pyramid sales scheme.

Nixon says the pyramid scheme also known as the St. Louis Dinner Party or the Birthday Club induced new participants to enter at the soup and salad level and pay \$5,000 to the person at the top, or dessert level. Entry-level participants then would move up as more participants came in at the lowest level. Nixon says the terms used to describe the levels might vary from scheme to scheme.

This pyramid scheme, like others we've seen in the past few years, styled itself as a gifting network to pretend it had an air of legitimacy, Nixon says. Today's judgment and the \$20,000 in penalties should dispel any charade that these operations are anything other than illegal pyramid schemes.

Nixon notes that because the number of participants required to keep a pyramid scheme viable grows exponentially, the pyramid inevitably and often quickly collapses. A few participants who got in early may benefit, Nixon says, but most will end up poorer.

If Bright and Mechura do not comply with the terms of the consent judgment, they face a suspended penalty of \$36,260 to pay for the state's costs of investigating and prosecuting the case.

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