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BUSINESSWOMAN GETS 60 DAYS FOR FRAUD TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION COMPANY OWNER WAS DEEP IN DEBT

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NORFOLK - A judge on Thursday sentenced the president of a Norfolk language translation and interpretation company to **60** days in jail for defrauding creditors of more than \$100,000 by writing bad checks and falsifying financial documents.

Julie T. Garth, 33, pleaded guilty to one count of writing a worthless check and to three counts of attempting to obtain money by false pretenses. The state's sentencing guidelines called for Garth to serve at least seven months, but the judge went below the recommended sentence.

Circuit Judge Junius P. Fulton III said Thursday morning that Garth should not be "treated differently than anyone else" because she had once been wealthy. But Fulton also said there were extenuating circumstances in her case presented by the defense.

Garth's psychiatrist testified that she suffered from major depression after the death of her parents in an airplane crash. A divorce, losing custody of her daughter and a concussive head injury all contributed to her physical and mental decline in recent years.

Prosecutors, however, argued for more time in jail, noting that Garth conspired to keep her creditors at bay by lying to them. Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney S. Clark Daugherty said Garth also violated her bond order - forbidding her to conduct any financial transactions - when she attempted to sell her business for \$500,000 in January.

Daugherty said the case demonstrates how difficult it can be to **get** a jail or prison sentence for white-collar criminals. Garth's attorney, however, said the sentence was just.

"It doesn't **get** any better than this," lawyer Andrew Protogyrou told Garth after the hearing.

Garth's company, ATG Language Solutions, opened in October 1996 at Monticello Arcade. It provided interpreters for international visitors and conferences, and foreign language instruction. In a 1997 interview, Garth said her company offered services including document translation, audio and video translation, on-site interpretation, corporate or private language instruction and cross-cultural training.

But, according to court documents and Garth's attorney, her business was overwhelmed by debt.

Protogyrou said the business lost money for several years and Garth is now on the verge of bankruptcy.

A creditor took out a criminal complaint against Garth in June 1999. Police arrested her again in October on additional charges.

In an interview earlier this year, Vince Mancuso, senior vice president for Hawaii-based ALTRES Financial, said his debt recovery company bought debts that Garth claimed were owed to her company.

They paid Garth \$154,000 for \$205,000 worth of debt, Mancuso said.

When Mancuso said his company began to track down the debts, he learned that a friend of Garth's had posed as one of the clients who allegedly owed money on a fake invoice.

Police arrested Garth, and she "confessed to forging the invoices because of the severe financial trouble she was in," according to court documents.

Fulton ordered Garth to pay more than \$160,000 in restitution. But she may be eligible to serve her sentence in a series of weekends when she reports to the city jail July 22, her attorney said.

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PHOTO

Julie T. Garth will spend **60** days in jail for defrauding creditors of

more than \$100,000 through her Norfolk interpretation and translation company.

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