



Department of Justice

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Middle District of Louisiana

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**SIX MORE INDICTED IN BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA,
ON FRAUD CHARGES RELATED TO HURRICANE DISASTER RELIEF PROGRAMS**

BATON ROUGE, LA – A federal grand jury returned indictments against six more Louisiana residents on fraud charges related to hurricane disaster relief programs, United States Attorney David R. Dugas announced today.

TIMOTHY E. DeCLOUET, age 38, of New Iberia, Louisiana, was charged in a one-count indictment with wire fraud in obtaining disaster unemployment benefits for alleged losses resulting from Hurricane Rita. DeCLOUET is charged with defrauding the Louisiana Department of Labor (LDOL) and the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) by applying for benefits under the disaster unemployment assistance program from on or about September 29, 2005, to on or about June 27, 2006, while allegedly failing to notify LDOL of his employment after the storm. These funds were intended for persons who had become unemployed as a result of the disaster. The charge resulted from an investigation conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General. If convicted, DeCLOUET faces a maximum sentence of twenty years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both.

WANDA TURNER, age 28, of New Iberia, Louisiana, was charged in a one-count indictment with wire fraud in obtaining disaster unemployment benefits for alleged losses resulting from Hurricane Rita. TURNER is charged with defrauding the Louisiana Department of Labor (LDOL) and the Federal Emergency Management Administration by applying for benefits under the Unemployment Insurance program (administered by LDOL and funded from both private employment contributions and the federal government), the Extended Benefits program (also funded from private employment contributions and the federal government), and the disaster unemployment assistance program (administered by the LDOL and funded by FEMA), from on or about October 31, 2005, to on or about May 19, 2006, while allegedly failing to notify LDOL of her employment after the storm. The charge resulted from an investigation conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General. If convicted, DeCLOUET faces a maximum sentence of twenty years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both.

KOIEASHA JONES, age 26, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, was charged in a two-count indictment with making a false and fraudulent claim for disaster assistance benefits (Count One) and with illegal conversion of government property, that is, a check from FEMA for expedited disaster assistance (Count Two). The charges resulted from an investigation conducted by the U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General. If convicted on Count One, JONES faces a maximum sentence of five years imprisonment, a

\$250,000 fine, or both. If convicted on Count Two, JONES faces a maximum sentence of ten years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both.

ROBIN BECNEL, age 44, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, was charged in a one-count indictment with illegal conversion of government property, that is, a check from FEMA for expedited disaster assistance. The charge resulted from an investigation conducted by the U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General. If convicted, BECNEL faces a maximum sentence of ten years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both.

BRIDGETTE N. TONEY, age 24, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, was charged in a two-count indictment with making a false and fraudulent claim for disaster assistance benefits and with making false and fraudulent statements to FEMA. The charges resulted from an investigation conducted by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General. If convicted, TONEY faces a maximum sentence of five years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both, per count.

EDWIN L. FRANKLIN, age 24, of Port Allen, Louisiana, was charged in a two-count indictment with making false and fraudulent claims for disaster assistance benefits and with making false and fraudulent statements to FEMA. The charges resulted from an investigation conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. If convicted, FRANKLIN faces a maximum sentence of five years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both, per count.

These six individuals bring to seventy-four the total number of defendants who have been charged in the Middle District of Louisiana with violations related to hurricane disaster relief funds.

In September 2005, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales created the Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, designed to deter, investigate and prosecute disaster-related federal crimes such as charity fraud, identity theft, procurement fraud and insurance fraud. The Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force – chaired by Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division – includes the FBI, the U.S. Inspectors General community, the U.S. Secret Service, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the Executive Office for United States Attorneys and others.

For further information, contact David R. Dugas, U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Louisiana, or Lyman Thornton, First Assistant U.S. Attorney, at (225) 389-0443. Anyone suspecting criminal activity involving disaster assistance programs can make an anonymous report by calling the toll-free Hurricane Relief Fraud Hotline, 1-866-720-5721, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, until further notice. Information can also be emailed to the Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force at HKFTF@leo.gov or sent by surface mail, with as many details as possible, to Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-4909.

NOTE: An indictment is a determination by a grand jury that there is probable cause to believe that offenses have been committed by the defendant. The defendant, of course, is presumed innocent until and unless he/she is proven guilty at trial.

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