



Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office
Southern District of Texas

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KATRINA EVACUEE GUILTY OF USING ANOTHER'S SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

(HOUSTON, Texas) - Bobby Hammond, 48, has been found guilty on eight counts of wire fraud and aggravated identity theft, United States Attorney Don DeGabrielle announced today. Hammond was charged with using another person's Social Security number in order to receive Hurricane Katrina disaster unemployment assistance on an additional debit card.

The Louisiana Department of Labor (DOL) administered a federally-funded disaster unemployment assistance program and provided weekly \$98 payments on debit cards to individuals who lost their job as a result of Hurricane Katrina but did not qualify for regular unemployment assistance. The evidence presented at trial showed that Hammond, a Katrina evacuee who relocated to Angleton, Texas, and then lived in a free apartment in Houston, applied for the assistance with the Louisiana DOL, Oct. 3, 2005. The first application Hammond filed contained his true Social Security number, but applied again four days later using a Social Security number in which the last digit was changed from his true number. Based on these applications, Hammond received two debit cards in the mail. Deliberating less than two hours, the jury returned the verdict after the two-day trial before United States District Judge Melinda Harmon

Beginning in mid-November 2005, recipients of disaster unemployment assistance had to make a weekly phone call confirming their continued eligibility for the weekly \$98 payment. In order to

access their claim, recipients had to enter the Social Security number associated with the claim. Hammond repeatedly made these calls for both cards and each week, for the second card, entered the Social Security number that was not his into the computerized call system. Hammond obtained \$3724 on the second card to which he was not entitled.

The jury convicted Hammond of four counts of wire fraud and four counts of aggravated identity theft. The aggravated identity theft conviction carries as mandatory prison term of two years, while the wire fraud conviction carries a punishment of up to twenty years imprisonment and a fine of up to \$250,000 and must run consecutive to any other sentences imposed.

Harmon scheduled sentencing for Jan. 18, 2008, at 10 a.m. and ordered Hammond, who had been out on bond pending trial, into the custody of the United States Marshalls Service after the jury verdict was announced.

The United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Texas is a member of the Department of Justice's Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, created by former Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales to deter, detect and prosecute unscrupulous individuals who try to take advantage of the Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita disasters. Headed by Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher, the Task Force is comprised of federal, state, and local law enforcement investigating agencies and the United States Attorney's Offices in the Gulf Coast region and nationwide.

The case was investigated by the Department of Homeland Security - Office of Inspector General and the Department of Labor - Office of Inspector General and was be prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Steve Corso and Gregg Costa.