



# Department of Justice

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Middle District of Louisiana

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## **THREE MORE SENTENCED IN BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA, ON DISASTER RELIEF FRAUD CHARGES**

BATON ROUGE, LA – Three more Louisiana residents were sentenced in federal court on fraud charges related to a hurricane disaster relief program, United States Attorney David R. Dugas announced today.

THALISHA DAVIS, age 30, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, pled guilty on September 12, 2007, to an indictment charging her with two counts of making a false and fraudulent claim for disaster assistance benefits (Counts One and Two) and one count of theft of government property (Count Three). According to the stipulated factual basis, DAVIS, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, submitted two fraudulent applications for hurricane disaster assistance benefits from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) using false and fictitious names and Social Security numbers. She received nearly \$15,000 as a result of her efforts to defraud FEMA. DAVIS also submitted a fraudulent application for disaster unemployment assistance and received \$3,822 in unemployment benefits to which she was not entitled. DAVIS was sentenced today by U.S. District Court Judge Frank J. Polozola to a term of imprisonment of fifteen months, three years of supervised release following her release from prison, \$18,571.51 in restitution, and a \$300 special assessment. The indictment in this matter was filed by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Texas in Houston. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General conducted the investigation of this matter.

CLARENA N. MCGEE, age 56, of Fluker, Louisiana, pled guilty on October 3, 2007, to Count One of an indictment charging her with wire fraud. According to the factual basis in the plea agreement, the defendant submitted fraudulent applications for individual assistance and disaster unemployment assistance using the name and identity of her deceased twin sister. In addition to the benefits that the defendant received in her own name, MCGEE fraudulently received \$7,788 in disaster assistance benefits in her deceased sister's name, to which the defendant was not entitled. MCGEE was sentenced today by U.S. District Court Judge Frank J. Polozola to a term of probation of five years, including six months of home detention; \$7,788 in restitution; and a \$100 special assessment. The U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Inspector General conducted the investigation of this matter.

WENDY PATE, age 38, of Ethel, Louisiana, pled guilty on September 19, 2007, to a bill of information charging her with two counts of making false and fraudulent claims for disaster assistance benefits. PATE was sentenced today by U.S. District Court Judge Frank J. Polozola to a term of probation of four years, \$9,722.10 in restitution, and a \$200 special assessment. The U.S. Postal Service's Office of Inspector General and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General conducted the investigation of this matter.

The number of individuals who have been charged in the Middle District of Louisiana with violations related to hurricane disaster relief funds stands at one hundred fifty-one.

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](mailto: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.

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