



Department of Justice

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Middle District of Louisiana

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ANOTHER INDICTED, ANOTHER SENTENCED
IN BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA, ON DISASTER RELIEF FRAUD CHARGES

BATON ROUGE, LA – Another Louisiana resident was sentenced in federal court and another indicted by a federal grand jury on fraud charges related to a hurricane disaster relief program, United States Attorney David R. Dugas announced today.

DREWEY PIERRE WHITTAKER, age 46, formerly of Villa Rica, Georgia, pled guilty on April 5, 2006 to one count of wire fraud and two counts of illegal use of Social Security numbers in connection with fraudulent applications for Hurricane Katrina disaster relief. The indictment against WHITTAKER had charged WHITTAKER with carrying out an extensive scheme to defraud the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Louisiana Department of Labor (LDOL) by submitting one fraudulent application for expedited disaster assistance and forty one (41) fraudulent applications for disaster unemployment assistance (DUA). To submit the fraudulent applications for DUA, WHITTAKER created a series of false names and false Social Security account numbers, then falsely claimed that these imaginary people had been working in Louisiana and lost their jobs as a result of Hurricane Katrina. The indictment alleged that WHITTAKER received dozens of debit cards containing DUA funds from the LDOL and utilized the debit cards in November of 2005.

WHITTAKER was sentenced today by Chief Judge Ralph E. Tyson to a term of imprisonment of twenty seven months, five years of supervised release, and \$39,835.08 in restitution. Special Agents of the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Inspector General, the Social Security Administration's Office of Inspector General, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General conducted the investigation of this matter. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Ian F. Hipwell.

Also today, WENDY S. PATE, age 38, of Ethel, Louisiana, was charged in an indictment with four counts of wire fraud in obtaining disaster relief benefits for alleged losses resulting from Hurricane Katrina. In September of 2005, PATE allegedly submitted two fraudulent applications to FEMA for expedited disaster assistance, causing approximately \$8,700 to be transferred into bank accounts identified in the applications. The charges resulted from an investigation conducted by the U.S. Postal Service's Office of Inspector General, with assistance from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General. If convicted, PATE faces a maximum sentence of twenty years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both, per count.

Today's indictment brings the total number of individuals who have been charged in the Middle District of Louisiana with violations related to hurricane disaster relief funds to one hundred sixteen.

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.

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