



# Department of Justice

**United States Attorney Donald R. Burkhalter  
Southern District of Mississippi**

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## **LOUISIANA WOMAN ARRAIGNED ON KATRINA FRAUD**

Gulfport, Miss. – Bonnie Gianakis, now of Jefferson, Louisiana, formerly of Bay St. Louis, Miss., appeared before Chief U.S. Magistrate Judge John M. Roper today for completion of her detention hearing and arraignment on fraud charges related to Hurricane Katrina, U.S. Attorney Donald R. Burkhalter announced. Gianakis was granted bond, but is to be placed on strict third party custodial supervision and home monitoring pending trial. Gianakis was indicted by a Federal Grand Jury on charges of stealing government money, filing a false claim, and making false statements.

The indictment alleges that Gianakis fraudulently applied for and received disaster assistance funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency by falsely representing her residency at the time of Hurricane Katrina. For the alleged false claim and statements in support thereof, Gianakis received over \$30,000.00 in money and benefits from FEMA. Gianakis faces a maximum penalty of thirty years in prison and fines of up to \$250,000.00. She is scheduled for trial before U.S. District Judge Louis Guirola, Jr. on February 16, 2010.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, with significant assistance from the New Orleans FBI office in locating the defendant.

Criminal indictments are only charges and not evidence of guilt. A defendant is presumed to be innocent until and unless proven guilty.

In September, 2005, former Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales created the national 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 for the Criminal Division, Lanny A. Breuer, includes members from the FBI, Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General, the Federal Trade Commission, the Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, the Postal Inspector's Office and the Executive Office of United States Attorneys, among others.

Pursuant to the Justice Department initiative, a local Katrina Fraud Task Force, consisting of over 20 Federal and State law enforcement agencies, was formed in the Southern District of Mississippi to pursue and prosecute individuals who engage in fraud associated with the hurricanes.

If anyone has information concerning possible fraud being committed during the post-Katrina recovery effort, please call either the DHS-OIG Fraud Hotline at 1-866-720-5721 or the FBI Fraud Hotline at 1-800-225-5324.

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