



PRESS NOTICE

W. WALTER WILKINS UNITED STATES ATTORNEY DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA

*1441 Main Street, Suite 500 * Columbia, SC 29201 * (803) 929-3000**

November 4, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT PERSON: KEVIN F. MCDONALD
(803) 929-3000

THREE DSS CHECK CASHERS PLEAD GUILTY **13 More Arraigned on Federal Charges**

Columbia, South Carolina --- United States Attorney W. Walter Wilkins stated that Brenda Marie Trapp, age 48, of Columbia, South Carolina; Raven Elaine Brown, age 30, of Blythewood, South Carolina; and Derrick Londell Johnson, age 38 and Ricky Donald Gratic, age 47, both of Winnsboro, South Carolina, pled guilty on Tuesday to theft of government property for their role in the DSS embezzlement scheme.

Today 13 more DSS check cashers were arraigned on federal charges of theft of government property: Johnnie Mae Battle, age 65, Barbara Lynn Martin, age 53, Fronnie Andina Harris, age 58, Troy Lydell Taylor, age 38, Albert Cruel, age 53, Antonio S. Smith, age 33 Willie Howard Ross, age 66, and Jocelyn Renee Egleton, age 28, all of Columbia; Joseph Penneal Young, age 41, and Harriet Young Woodard, age 38, both of Winnsboro;

Wendell Smith, age 49, of West Columbia; and Gail Moody Johnson, age 53, and Hoover Johnson, Jr., age 49, both of Aiken.

Paul Timothy Moore was indicted in February for using his position as the DSS Finance Director to authorize the issuance of hundreds of DSS checks between May 2004 and October 2008, in the approximate average amount of \$7,000.00 each. The checks were made payable to names allegedly provided by a co-conspirator who also recruited the named individuals to cash the checks and split the proceeds.

Moore pled guilty on October 29, 2009 to one count of conspiracy to commit honest services mail and wire fraud and theft of government property and one count of theft from an organization receiving federal funds, for his scheme to embezzle \$5.2 million dollars from DSS. Moore is currently awaiting sentencing.

The facts presented at the plea hearing were that from approximately May 2004 until October 2008, Moore used his position as the agency's Finance Director to authorize the issuance of approximately 750 DSS checks in the approximate amount of \$7,000.00 each. Initially, Moore found people willing to cash these checks and to then return a portion of the money to him. He also began giving checks to people that he had relationships with. Eventually, the checks were made payable to names provided by a co-conspirator, Jonathon Moses, age 42, of Columbia, who recruited the named individuals to cash the checks and split the proceeds. On September 9, 2009, Jonathan Moses was sentenced to 96 months of imprisonment.

To date, 52 people have been charged in this scheme. Mr. Wilkins said he expects additional arrests because it appears that more than 350 people may have been involved. "I

would encourage anyone with information to contact the Secret Service here in Columbia. I would also strongly encourage anyone who is involved to come forward; it would certainly be in their best interest." The phone number for the Columbia office of the Secret Service is (803) 772-4015.

The maximum possible penalty for theft of government property is ten years and a fine of \$250,000.00.

Mr. Wilkins stated, "Stealing money from DSS that could have been used to help the needy and underprivileged is reprehensible. These guilty pleas affirm our office's commitment to prosecute those who illegally line their pockets with public dollars. We are committed to vigorously prosecuting each and every individual involved in any respect in this scheme."

Mr. Wilkins stated that the case is being investigated by agents of the United States Secret Service and SLED, and that he has assigned the case to Assistant United States Attorney Debbie Barbier of the Columbia office for prosecution.

#####