



Department of Justice

United States Attorney Sally Quillian Yates
Northern District of Georgia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

04/21/10

<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan/>

CONTACT: Patrick Crosby

(404)581-6016

FAX (404)581-6160

MAN SENTENCED TO FEDERAL PRISON FOR STEALING DOMESTIC PARTNER'S SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS

ATLANTA, GA - CHARLES ASHTON DURHAM, 47, of Leesburg, Virginia, was sentenced today by United States District Judge J. Owen Forrester to serve one year, six months in federal prison on a charge of wire fraud, related to a scheme to steal approximately \$50,000 in Social Security benefits intended for his former domestic partner.

United States Attorney Sally Quillian Yates said, "Many Americans rely on social security benefits to sustain them when they become disabled and in retirement. Consequently, it is critical to protect the retirement and disability trust funds from fraud and abuse. The sentence imposed today should send a clear message that the U.S. Attorney's Office is committed to prosecuting those who steal from federal programs that are lifelines for many Americans."

"The Office of the Inspector General is gratified to have worked with the U.S. Attorney in ensuring that those who would fraudulently obtain Social Security benefits are brought to justice," said Guy P. Fallen, Special Agent in Charge, Office of the Inspector General-Social Security Administration.

DURHAM was sentenced to one year, six months in prison to be followed by three years of supervised release, and ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$52,866. DURHAM pleaded guilty to the charge on February 11, 2010.

According to United States Attorney Yates, the charges and other information presented in court: DURHAM and his former domestic partner, a social security disability benefits recipient, lived together in Atlanta, Georgia from 1991 until 2001. DURHAM's partner moved to Connecticut and returned to full-time work in 2003. The Social Security Administration was never informed of the beneficiaries' return to work and continued issuing disability benefits payments to DURHAM's former partner. At that time, the benefits payments were electronically deposited into a bank account in Atlanta, Georgia. When the account was closed by the benefits recipient in November 2003, the SSA began to issue the disability benefits payments in the form of United States Treasury checks, and mailed them to the benefits recipient's last known address, a residence previously shared with

DURHAM. DURHAM endorsed and negotiated the benefits checks, fraudulently using the signature of his former partner and opened a bank account using the name and social security number of his former partner. DURHAM then contacted the Social Security Administration and directed the agency to electronically deposit disability benefits payments designated for his former partner into the account. DURHAM used all the social security benefits funds deposited into the account for his own personal use. DURHAM's fraudulent actions caused the Social Security Administration to improperly issue \$49,629.18 in disability benefits payments.

This case was investigated by Special Agents of the Social Security Administration, Office of the Inspector General.

Special Assistant United States Attorney Loranzo M. Fleming prosecuted the case.

For further information please contact Sally Q. Yates, United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is www.justice.gov/usao/gan.