



U.S. Department of Justice

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BYRON POSTAL WORKER CHARGED WITH FRAUDULENTLY OBTAINING DISABILITY BENEFITS

ROCKFORD – PATRICK J. FITZGERALD, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois; and KENNETH T. LAAG, Postal Inspector-In-Charge of the Chicago Office of the United States Postal Inspection Service, today made the following announcement:

Today, a federal grand jury in Rockford returned an indictment charging VICKIE L. WEBBER, 46 (DOB: 03-10-59), of 6470 Clearview Drive in Byron, Illinois, with making false statements in connection with her claim for federal disability benefits.

The indictment alleges that Webber has been employed by the United States Postal Service (“USPS”) since December of 1986, and is assigned to the Byron, Illinois, Post Office as a rural letter carrier. The indictment alleges that in 2002, Webber applied for federal disability benefits, claiming that she was unable to perform her job because of extreme pain and limited movement in her hands and arms. According to the indictment, Webber has collected federal disability benefits continually since December of 2002.

Federal law requires that any federal employee collecting disability benefits must periodically submit certain forms. On these forms, the federal employee is required to report whether they have worked at another job, been self-employed, or operated a business, during the time periods for which the employee is seeking disability benefits. According to the indictment, the Department of Labor uses this information to determine whether the employee remains disabled, and, if so, whether the employee’s benefits should be reduced based upon his or her ability to work.

The indictment alleges that Webber made false statements on seven forms that she submitted to the USPS during 2003 and 2004 in connection with her disability claim. Specifically, the indictment alleges that Webber falsely stated on these forms that she had not worked, that she had not been self-employed, and that she had not been involved in any business enterprise. These statements were false, according to the indictment, because Webber operated a plant and garden business, known as “Clearview Pond & Garden,” located in Byron, while she was collecting federal disability benefits in 2003 and 2004.

Each count of the indictment carries a maximum of five years of imprisonment, a fine up to \$250,000, and restitution. If convicted, Webber’s actual sentence will be determined by the United States District Court, guided by the United States Sentencing Guidelines.

The arraignment for Webber is scheduled for Friday, March 10, 2006, at 10:30 a.m. The arraignment will be conducted by United States Magistrate Judge P. Michael Mahoney at the federal courthouse in Rockford.

The case is being investigated by the Chicago office of the United States Postal Inspection Service. The case will be prosecuted in federal court by Assistant United States Attorney SCOTT A. VERSEMAN.

Members of the public are reminded that an indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. The defendant is entitled to a fair trial at which the government has the burden of proving her guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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