



U.S. Department of Justice

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BYRON POSTAL WORKER CONVICTED OF FRAUDULENTLY OBTAINING DISABILITY BENEFITS

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

Late yesterday afternoon, a federal jury in Rockford returned guilty verdicts against VICKIE L. WEBBER, 47 (DOB: 03-10-59), of 6470 Clearview Drive in Byron, Illinois, on seven counts of making false statements in connection with her claim for federal disability benefits. The jury's verdict followed a six-day trial. Webber had been indicted for these crimes on March 7, 2006.

The indictment charged that Webber was employed by the United States Postal Service ("USPS") since December of 1986, and was assigned to the Byron, Illinois, Post Office as a rural letter carrier. According to the indictment, Webber applied for federal disability benefits in 2002, claiming that she was unable to perform her job because of extreme pain and limited movement in her hands and arms. 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. 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 charged that Webber made false statements on seven of the forms that she submitted to the USPS during 2003 and 2004 in connection with her disability claim. Specifically, 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 of the seven counts of the indictment carries a maximum of five years of imprisonment, a fine up to \$250,000, and restitution. Webber's actual sentence will be determined by the United States District Court, guided by the United States Sentencing Guidelines.

The sentencing hearing for Webber is scheduled for Thursday, February 1, 2007, at 9:00 a.m. The sentencing hearing will be conducted by United States District Judge Philip G. Reinhard at the federal courthouse in Rockford.

The case was investigated by the Chicago offices of the United States Postal Service, Office of the Inspector General, and the United States Postal Inspection Service. The case is being prosecuted in federal court by Assistant United States Attorneys SCOTT A. VERSEMAN and MICHAEL D. LOVE.

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