

UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE



*Acting United States Attorney William J. Flanagan
Western District of Louisiana*

United States Courthouse • 300 Fannin Street, Suite 3201 • Shreveport, Louisiana 71101-3068 • (318) 676-3600
United States Courthouse • 800 Lafayette Street, Suite 2200 • Lafayette, Louisiana 70501-7206 • (337) 262-6618

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Contact: Lisa Langley (318) 676-3600

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FEDERAL JURY FINDS FORMER FORT POLK EMPLOYEE GUILTY OF MAKING FALSE STATEMENTS TO OBTAIN COMPENSATION BENEFITS

Total Benefits Received by Defendant Totaled Over \$95,000.00

Lafayette, Louisiana: Sherrie D. Wood, 60, of Leesville, Louisiana, was convicted by a federal jury in Lake Charles yesterday for making false statements in order to obtain federal employees' compensation benefits, Acting United States Attorney William J. Flanagan announced today.

Wood was named in a four-count indictment in April of 2007 for submitting false information to the U. S. Department of Labor, Office of Workers' Compensation Program, to obtain benefits through the Federal Employees' Compensation Act. According to court testimony, Wood, a former dental assistant with the Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital at Fort Polk, La., made false representations from 2003 through 2006 on claims for compensation by concealing the fact that she was working during the reporting periods in which she was claiming disability. In fact, Wood was working during the reporting periods in various capacities for the Four Winds Tribe, Neutral Zone Cherokee Choctaw Corporation, American Indians of the Four Winds, Central Louisiana Intertribal Vocational Rehabilitation Program (CLIVR), and the West Louisiana Forestry Festival Board. Wood also became a licensed retail florist, artist, and a licensed private investigator during the time she was receiving benefits. Wood compensated herself as the Vice Chief, Secretary/Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer of the Four Winds Tribe and did not report her ability to work as required under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act, resulting in Wood improperly receiving benefits totaling over \$95,000.00.

Wood is scheduled for sentencing on May 27, 2010. She faces a maximum sentence of five years in prison, a \$250,000.00 fine, or both. Sentencing in federal court is determined by the discretion of federal judges and the governing statute. Parole has been abolished in the federal system.

This case was investigated by the U. S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, and the Criminal Investigation Division, Fort Polk, La. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Stephanie A. Finley.

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