



**United States Department of Justice  
United States Attorney's Office  
District of Minnesota**

## **News Release**

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### **Ten indicted for stealing mail from mail boxes and committing bank fraud and identity theft**

MINNEAPOLIS—A federal indictment unsealed late yesterday afternoon charges ten Twin Cities' residents with stealing mail and using the identities of the victims of that crime to create bank accounts and obtain cash. The indictment, which was filed yesterday, charges Ricky W. Mariano, age 40, of Oakdale; Sarrah M. Vail, age 40; James Edward Freeman, age 19; and Vincent Robert Vail, age 18, all of White Bear Lake; James N. Hahne, age 35, and Clifton G. Evans, Jr., age 33, both of St. Paul; Benjamin J. Dolan, age 35, and Anne Marie Vail, age 46, both of Vadnais Heights; Jamie Marie Sylvester, age 34, of North St. Paul; and Jacob Charles Dutton, age 28, of Minneapolis, with one count of theft and receipt of stolen mail and one count of bank fraud conspiracy.

In addition, Mariano was charged with one count of destruction of letter boxes, one count of bank fraud, and one count of aggravated identity theft; Sarrah Vail was charged with two counts of bank fraud and two counts of aggravated identity theft; Hahne was charged with one count of destruction of letter boxes, one count of bank fraud, and one count of aggravated identity theft; Evans was charged with one count of bank fraud and one count of aggravated identity theft; Dolan was charged with one count of destruction of letter boxes, one count of bank fraud, and one count of aggravated identity theft; Freeman was charged with one count of aggravated identity theft; Vincent Vail was charged with one count of aggravated identity theft; Sylvester was charged with one count of bank fraud and one count of aggravated identity theft; and Dutton was charged with one count of destruction of letter boxes and one count of

aggravated identity theft. The indictment was unsealed following the initial appearance of Sarrah Vail in federal court.

The indictment alleges that from July of 2010 through July of 2011, the defendants stole mail from curbside mailboxes in Dakota, Ramsey, and Washington counties. The alleged purpose of their actions was to obtain and use the personal information and financial instruments of the victims of that crime in order to acquire funds from their bank accounts. The personal information stolen included names, birth dates, and bank account numbers, among other things; while the financial instruments taken included credit cards and checks.

To access the bank accounts of their victims, the defendants allegedly employed a process known as “check washing,” through which a chemical is used to erase certain details from checks while retaining other information, such as bank account numbers and routing numbers. In this case, the “washed” checks were then rewritten at various retail stores in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

The indictment also alleges that from December of 2010 through January 31, 2011, Mariano, Hahne, Dolan, and Dutton destroyed letter boxes known as blue collection boxes in order to obtain mail.

If convicted, the defendants face a potential maximum penalty of 30 years in prison on the conspiracy charge and five years on the mail theft charge. In addition, the potential maximum penalty on each count of bank fraud is 30 years, and the potential maximum penalty on each count of destruction of letter boxes is three years. There is a mandatory minimum penalty of two years on each count of aggravated identity theft. All sentences will be determined by a federal district court judge.

This case is the result of an investigation by the United States Postal Inspection Service, the sheriff offices of Dakota, Ramsey, and Washington counties, along with the police departments of Blaine, Inver Grove Heights, Lakeville, and White Bear Lake. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Laura M. Provinzino.

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*An indictment is a determination by a grand jury that there is probable cause to believe that offenses have been committed by a defendant. A defendant, of course, is presumed innocent until he or she pleads guilty or is proven guilty at trial.*