

Department of Justice

United States Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr.
Western District of New York

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
OCTOBER 5, 2012
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CONTACT: BARBARA BURNS
PHONE: (716) 843-5817
FAX: (716) 551-3051

BUFFALO WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO STEALING GOVERNMENT FUNDS

BUFFALO, N.Y. - U.S. Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr. announced today that Antionette Willoughby, 25, of Buffalo, N.Y., pleaded guilty to theft of government funds before U.S. District Judge Richard J. Arcara. The charge carries a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison, a fine of \$250,000 or both.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Russell T. Ippolito, Jr., who is handling the case, stated that Willoughby, while employed part-time with the United States Postal Service, collected unemployment insurance benefits to which she was not entitled. Part-time employees are entitled to unemployment insurance benefits as long as their income does not exceed \$400/week. Between October 1, 2008, and March 31, 2012, the defendant fraudulently certified for unemployment insurance benefits on 136 separate occasions. However, Willoughby failed to report income earned from two other employers in order to qualify for and receive the benefits. In total, the defendant stole \$23,331 in unemployment insurance benefits.

The plea is the culmination of an investigation by the United States Post Office, Office of Inspector General, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Robert Lapina, the United States Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, Office of Labor Racketeering and Fraud Investigations, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Robert L. Panella, New York Region and the New York State Department of Labor, under the direction of Commissioner Peter M. Rivera.

Sentencing is scheduled for February 11, 2013, at 1:00 p.m. before Judge Arcara.

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