



Department of Justice

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Seven Indicted In Connection with Hurricane Katrina Fraud

WASHINGTON – Seven current and former residents of Washington were indicted today by a federal grand jury for filing false claims that they suffered damages from Hurricane Katrina, U.S. Attorney Jeffrey C. Sullivan of the Western District of Washington announced today. Some defendants fraudulently collected thousands of dollars in assistance.

“Despite our geographic distance from the Gulf Coast, the citizens of Western Washington have given generously with their time and money to help with Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts,” said U.S. Attorney Jeffrey C. Sullivan “It is unconscionable that some of our citizens are filing false claims for resources that should be used for the real victims of this disaster.”

Those indicted today include: Rosemarie Calvin, 45, a former Washington resident now residing in Henderson, Nev.; Petrice Sharnell Trent, 36, a former Washington resident now residing in Harvey, La.; Gregory Frank Wilkes, 50, of Auburn, Wash.; Diane Lynn Clay, 53 of Everett, Wash.; George E. Cuiellette, 60, of Bellevue, Wash.; Valerie Montgomery, 38, of Lakewood, Wash.; and Joy Lynn Promise, 36, of Everett, Wash.

Rosemarie Calvin is charged with mail fraud, four counts of wire fraud and one count of making a false statement. Calvin filed over the Internet for \$23,206 in Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) benefits claiming her primary residence was in New Orleans, La. at the time of Hurricane Katrina. In fact, Calvin resided in western Washington before and during the Hurricane Katrina disaster. George Cuiellette is also charged with two counts of mail fraud and a count of making a false statement in connection with \$17,462 in claims he made for FEMA disaster assistance. Cuiellette also claimed his primary residence was in New Orleans, La. when it was in western Washington. Mail fraud is punishable by up to 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

Three defendants, Trent, Montgomery and Promise are charged with making a false statement to FEMA. These three defendants claimed their primary residences were in Louisiana or Mississippi, when in fact they resided in Washington at the time of the Hurricane. Trent claimed \$17,906 in disaster assistance, Montgomery claimed \$10,512 in assistance and Promise claimed \$2,000 in assistance. Making a false statement is punishable by up to five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

Wilkes is charged with four counts of theft of government property for cashing \$8,866 in stolen FEMA assistance checks. Clay is charged with receipt of stolen government property for

cashing a \$2,000 assistance check. Both felonies are punishable by up to ten years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

The Katrina Fraud Task Force in the Western District of Washington is being led by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General (DHS-OIG). The task force pro-actively reviewed all applications for Hurricane Katrina assistance from the State of Washington, to determine whether the recipients were residing in Washington or the Gulf Coast at the time of the hurricane. The investigation of fraudulent claims is continuing.

In September 2005, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales created the Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, designed to deter, investigate and prosecute disaster-related federal crimes such as charity fraud, identity theft, procurement fraud and insurance fraud. The Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force – chaired by Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division – includes the FBI, the U.S. Inspectors General community, the U.S. Secret Service, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys and others.

Anyone suspecting criminal activity involving disaster assistance programs can make an anonymous report by calling the toll-free Hurricane Relief Fraud Hotline, 1-866-720-5721, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, until further notice. Information can also be emailed to the Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force at HKTFT@leo.gov or sent by surface mail, with as many details as possible, to Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, Baton Rouge, La. 70821-4909.

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