



Department of Justice

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Middle District of Louisiana

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ANOTHER PLEADS GUILTY IN BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA, ON DISASTER RELIEF FRAUD CHARGES

BATON ROUGE, LA – United States Attorney David R. Dugas announced that another Louisiana resident pled guilty yesterday in federal court on fraud charges related to a hurricane disaster relief program.

STEPHANIE WILLIAMS DONAHUE, age 35, of Baton Rouge pled guilty yesterday before Chief U.S. District Court Judge Ralph E. Tyson to a bill of information charging her with illegal conversion of government property and making false statements. According to the factual basis in the plea agreement, DONAHUE and others obtained, without authority, a check in the amount of \$10,391.51 that was issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to another person who was a true Hurricane Katrina victim. Further, DONAHUE and others caused the FEMA check to be cashed by means of forging the signature of the payee of the check, thereafter dividing the proceeds of the check among themselves. DONAHUE also pled guilty to falsely stating her income during the certification and recertification process for U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Section 8 rental assistance.

The case was investigated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Inspector General, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General, and the U.S. Secret Service. As a result of her guilty plea, DONAHUE faces a maximum sentence of fifteen years imprisonment, a \$500,000 fine, or both. She may also receive a term of supervised release after imprisonment of not more than three years.

The number of individuals who have been charged in the Middle District of Louisiana with violations related to hurricane disaster relief funds stands at one hundred seventy.

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 the Assistant Attorney General of the U.S. Department of Justice's 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 United States Attorneys and others.

For further information, contact David R. Dugas, U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Louisiana, or Lyman Thornton, First Assistant U.S. Attorney, at (225) 389-0443. 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 HKFTF@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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