

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA

FELONY

**INDICTMENT FOR CONSPIRACY TO DEFRAUD
THE GOVERNMENT WITH RESPECT TO CLAIMS**

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA * CRIMINAL NO.

v. * SECTION:

CATHY ROSS VINNETT * VIOLATION: 18 U.S.C. § 286
LASHANDA RUTH VINNETT *

* * *

The Grand Jury charges that:

COUNT 1

A. AT ALL TIMES MATERIAL HEREIN

1. The defendants, CATHY ROSS VINNETT ("CATHY VINNETT") and her daughter, LASHANDA RUTH VINNETT ("LASHANDA VINNETT"), were engaged in the practice and business of preparing individual tax returns in the Eastern District of Louisiana and elsewhere.

2. From on or about November 2, 2005, and continuing to on or about October 16, 2007, CATHY VINNETT owned and operated D & C Tax Service ("D & C") located in Destrehan, Louisiana.

3. On or about December 12, 2008, **CATHY VINNETT** established River Parish Tax Professionals (“River Parish”) located in LaPlace, Louisiana.

4. The Internal Revenue Service (“IRS”) was an agency of the United States and a branch of the United States Department of the Treasury.

5. The IRS was responsible for the collection of federal income taxes owed by individual taxpayers and business entities.

6. The First-Time Homebuyer Credit (“FTHBC”) was a refundable tax credit up to \$7,500.00 that was only available to individuals who purchased a home between April 1, 2008 and July 1, 2009, and who did not own any other primary residence during the three year time period preceding the purchase of the home.

7. An Electronic Filing Identification Number (“EFIN”) is assigned by the IRS to identify tax preparation firms or businesses that have completed the IRS e-file application process and an EFIN is required for the firm or business to electronically file federal tax returns.

8. A tax filer could claim the FTHBC by completing an IRS Form 1040 with an attached IRS Form 5405 regardless of whether the filer had any federal tax withholdings.

B. THE OFFENSE

From on or about December 12, 2008, and continuing to on or about June 1, 2009, in the Eastern District of Louisiana and elsewhere, the defendants, **CATHY VINNETT** and **LASHANDA VINNETT**, and others known and unknown to the Grand Jury, knowingly and willfully entered into an agreement, a combination, and a conspiracy with each other to defraud the IRS, a department of the United States Treasury, by obtaining and aiding to obtain the payment and allowance of false, fictitious, and fraudulent claims for tax refunds, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 286.

C. OBJECT OF THE CONSPIRACY

The object of the conspiracy was for the defendants, **CATHY VINNETT** and **LASHANDA VINNETT**, to collect personal information from individuals to prepare and file approximately three hundred 2008 U.S. Individual Income Tax Returns which fraudulently claimed the FTHBC resulting in approximately \$1,800,000.00 in false claims against the United States. Each claim was false because the individuals listed on the subject 2008 U.S. Individual Income Tax Returns did not purchase a home between April 1, 2008 and July 1, 2009, and thus did not qualify for the FTHBC.

D. OVERT ACTS

1. On or about November 8, 2008, **LASHANDA VINNETT** rented office space for River Parish located at 526 East Airline Highway in LaPlace, Louisiana.
2. On or about January 1, 2009, **CATHY VINNETT** and **LASHANDA VINNETT** opened River Parish located in LaPlace, Louisiana.
3. Prior to on or about December 12, 2008, **LASHANDA VINNETT**, using the identity of an acquaintance known to the Grand Jury, applied for an EFIN with the IRS.
4. Beginning sometime after December 2008, and continuing through on or about June 1, 2009, **CATHY VINNETT** and **LASHANDA VINNETT** utilized "recruiters" to locate potential "clients." These recruiters advised potential clients that the President and the federal government were giving out stimulus money and instructed the individuals to visit River Parish in order to obtain their money.

5. On or about January 5, 2009, **CATHY VINNETT** instructed her brother to open a bank account for River Parish at the J.P. Morgan Chase Bank branch located in LaPlace, Louisiana.

6. On or about January 6, 2009, **CATHY VINNETT** instructed her brother to obtain an occupational license for River Parish.

7. On or about March 4, 2009, **CATHY VINNETT**, after meeting with River Parish client M.F., filed, or directed someone to file, a tax return with the IRS in M.F.'s name that fraudulently claimed a refund in the amount of approximately \$10,263.00 based on a false FTHBC.

8. On or about March 16, 2009, **CATHY VINNETT**, after meeting with River Parish client P.W., filed, or directed someone to file, a tax return with the IRS in P.W.'s name that fraudulently claimed a refund in the amount of approximately \$6,974.00 based on a false FTHBC.

9. On or about April 1, 2009, **CATHY VINNETT**, after meeting with River Parish client W.L., filed, or directed someone to file, a tax return with the IRS in W.L.'s name that fraudulently claimed a refund in the amount of approximately \$10,003.00 based on a false FTHBC.

10. On or about April 16, 2009, **LASHANDA VINNETT**, after meeting with River Parish client R.V., filed, or directed someone to file, a tax return with the IRS in R.V.'s name that fraudulently claimed a refund in the amount of approximately \$7,365.00 based on a false FTHBC.

11. On or about April 16, 2009, **CATHY VINNETT**, after meeting with River Parish client B.B., filed, or directed someone to file, a tax return with the IRS in B.B.'s name that

fraudulently claimed a refund in the amount of approximately \$6,472.00 based on a false FTHBC.

12. On or about April 16, 2009, **CATHY VINNETT**, after meeting with River Parish client S.E., filed, or directed someone to file, a tax return with the IRS in S.E.'s name that fraudulently claimed a refund in the amount of approximately \$6,984.00 based on a false FTHBC.

13. On or about April 16, 2009, **CATHY VINNETT**, after meeting with River Parish clients C.B. and L.B., filed, or directed someone to file, tax returns with the IRS in C.B.'s and L.B.'s names that fraudulently claimed refunds in the amount of approximately \$7,061.00 and \$6,472.00, respectively, based on a false FTHBC.

14. On or about May 1, 2009, **CATHY VINNETT** instructed her brother to open a bank account for River Parish at Omni Bank located in LaPlace, Louisiana.

15. On or about May 7, 2009, **LASHANDA VINNETT**, after meeting with River Parish client T.F., filed, or directed someone to file, a tax return with the IRS in T.F.'s name that fraudulently claimed a refund in the amount of approximately \$5,297.00 based on a false FTHBC.

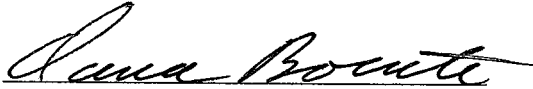
16. In an effort to conceal the conspiracy, on or about May 15, 2009, **CATHY VINNETT** knowingly made material false statements to IRS federal agents when she claimed she had no knowledge about false tax returns being prepared at River Parish, she did not own a tax business, and that her brother was the owner of River Parish.

17. From on or about December 12, 2008, and continuing through on or about June 1, 2009, CATHY VINNETT and LASHANDA VINNETT used, or directed others to use, a fraudulently obtained EFIN to file approximately three hundred individual 2008 tax returns with the IRS.

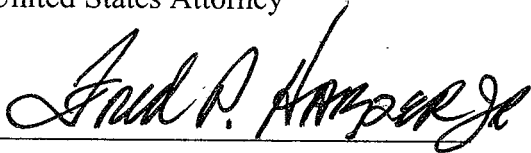
All in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 286.

A TRUE BILL:

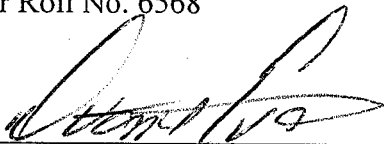
FOREPERSON



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New Orleans, Louisiana
May 30, 2013