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**KEATCHIE MAN SENTENCED TO PRISON FOR DEFRAUDING
SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION OF \$20,159**

Defendant ordered to pay \$20,159 in restitution

Shreveport, La.: United States Attorney Stephanie A. Finley announced today that Herman Smith, age 59, formerly from Yazoo City, MS, now residing in Keatchie, La., was sentenced today by U.S. District Judge Thomas Stagg to one year in prison and three years of supervised release for defrauding the Social Security Administration (SSA). Smith was also ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$20,159.

In early 2001, Smith began to act as a caretaker and moved into the home of a man who was confined to a wheelchair. At some point, the disabled man arranged for the SSA to mail his benefit checks to Smith's address. After the man died in May of 2003, Smith failed to notify the SSA. For over eight years after the man's death, Smith forged his signature and continued to receive the SSA checks totaling \$20,159.

U.S. Attorney Finley stated, "Social Security disability benefits are designed to assist those who are injured and are no longer able to work. This kind of fraud hurts everyone, and undermines the system. The United States Attorney's Office will continue to prosecute individuals who fraudulently receive benefits that they are not entitled to receive."

This case was investigated by the Social Security Administration - Office of the Inspector General and the United States Postal Service. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Cristina Walker and Special Assistant United States Attorney Robert J. France.

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