



Department of Justice

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Middle District of Louisiana

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TWO MORE PLEAD GUILTY IN BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA, ON DISASTER RELIEF FRAUD CHARGES

BATON ROUGE, LA – United States Attorney David R. Dugas announced that two more Louisiana residents pled guilty in federal court yesterday to fraud charges related to hurricane disaster relief programs.

CHERYL M. TAYLOR, age 48, of Greensburg, Louisiana, pled guilty yesterday to a bill of information charging her with forgery against the United States, in violation of 18 United States Code, Section 495. According to the stipulated factual basis in the plea agreement, TAYLOR altered the face of a U.S. Treasury check that had been made out to her for disaster relief benefits in the amount of \$1,425 so that it appeared to be payable in the amount of \$11,425. TAYLOR knew that she was only entitled to \$1,425. It was further stipulated that TAYLOR took the check to her bank and caused it to be deposited into her personal account, which was credited with a deposit of \$11,425. The charges resulted from an investigation conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General. As a result of her guilty plea, TAYLOR faces a maximum sentence of ten (10) years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both.

VERONICA A. WILLIAMS, age 40, of Geismar, Louisiana, pled guilty yesterday to Count One of an indictment charging her with mail fraud in connection with the submission of a fraudulent application for Hurricane Katrina disaster assistance benefits. The case was investigated by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. As a result of her guilty plea, WILLIAMS faces a maximum sentence of twenty (20) years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both. As part of the plea agreement, the U.S. Attorney's Office will dismiss Count Two of the indictment when WILLIAMS is sentenced on Count One.

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-five.

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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