



**U.S. Department of Justice**

United States Attorney  
Northern District of Illinois

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
MONDAY, JULY 9, 2012  
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**McHENRY WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO “SECRET SHOPPER” FRAUD SCHEME**

Rockford — A McHenry, Ill. woman pleaded guilty today in Federal Court to mail fraud. **Gloria Denise Ford**, 45, admitted that from January 2011 through November 2011, she participated in a “secret shopper scheme,” where victims applied to work-at-home advertisements on the internet believing they were being hired to work as a “secret shopper” or payment processor.

In a written plea agreement, Ford admitted that after applying for work, victims received a letter asking them to send an email to the email address contained in the letter. The victims also received at least one counterfeit negotiable instrument with the letter, such as a counterfeit money order, and were instructed to deposit the counterfeit negotiable instrument in their financial institution, withdraw a certain percentage, retain a certain percentage as payment for their services, and go to the nearest Western Union and wire transfer the proceeds as instructed. The victims were then instructed to report their experience, believing they were hired as secret shoppers to evaluate local businesses, and send their report via email to the email address contained in the letter. The participants in the scheme received the proceeds via the wire transfers before the victims learned that the money orders were counterfeit.

During the course of the scheme, Ford received about 10 packages from Nigeria, the United Kingdom, and France containing counterfeit money orders ranging from \$800 to \$1,000 each, appearing to be issued by the United Postal Service, Safeway, Navy Federal Credit Union, U.S. New

Mexico Federal Credit Union, and TruWest Credit Union. Ford received email instructions with attachments from her participants with a “secret shopper” letter and FedEx or Postal Express mailing labels, then placed a “secret shopper” letter in a FedEx or Postal Express mailing envelope along with at least one counterfeit money order, and affixed a label to the outside of the envelope. Ford mailed over \$1,000,000 in counterfeit money orders to victims throughout the United States, receiving at least \$12,000 as payment for her role in the scheme.

The charge in this case carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison, and a \$250,000 maximum fine, or an alternate fine totaling twice the loss or twice the gain, whichever is greater, a period of supervised release of up to 3 years following imprisonment, and restitution. The actual sentence will be determined by the United States District Court, guided by the advisory United States Sentencing Guidelines. Sentencing has been set for October 9, 2012, at 2:30 p.m.

The guilty plea was announced today by Gary S. Shapiro, Acting United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois; Thomas P. Brady, Inspector-in-Charge of the Chicago Division of the United States Postal Inspection Service; and Gary J. Hartwig, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Office, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Immigration & Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Scott R. Paccagnini.

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