



Department of Justice

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Southern District of Mississippi

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2008
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**MISSISSIPPI WOMAN SENTENCED AFTER PLEADING GUILTY
TO KATRINA FRAUD**

Gulfport, Miss. – Sarah Sonnier of Ocean Springs, Miss., was sentenced today after pleading guilty to submitting false claims to FEMA and the American Red Cross for Hurricane Katrina disaster assistance funds, U.S. Attorney Dunn Lampton announced. Sonnier defrauded the federal government of over \$18,000.00, and the American Red Cross of over \$3,000.00, by claiming damage to an address in Biloxi at which she did not live at the time of Hurricane Katrina.

U.S. District Judge Walter J. Gex, III sentenced Sonnier to serve four months in home confinement and five months on probation. Further, she was ordered to pay full restitution to FEMA and the American Red Cross.

In September, 2005, former Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales created the national 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 Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division Matthew Friedrich, includes members from the FBI, Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General, the Federal Trade Commission, the Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, the Postal Inspector's Office and the Executive Office of United States Attorneys, among others.

Pursuant to the Justice Department initiative, a local Katrina Fraud Task Force, consisting of over 20 Federal and State law enforcement agencies, was formed in the Southern District of Mississippi to pursue and prosecute individuals who engage in fraud associated with the hurricanes.

If anyone has information concerning possible fraud being committed during the post-Katrina recovery effort, please call either the DHS-OIG Fraud Hotline at 1-866-720-5721 or the FBI Fraud Hotline at 1-800-225-5324.

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