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Valdez Couple Indicted For Tax Crimes

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 28, 2011

Anchorage, Alaska – United States Attorney Karen L. Loeffler announced today that a couple from Valdez were indicted by a federal grand jury in Anchorage with attempted evasion of federal taxes and with failing to file a tax return

The six-count indictment names Gary Jokela, 54, and Marladeen Jokela, 54, both of Valdez, Alaska, as the sole defendants. Both defendants are charged with one count of evasion of payment of tax for the years 2005-2009. Mr. Jokela is charged with five counts of willful failure to file an income tax return for the years 1998-2008.

The indictment alleges that the defendants last filed a tax return in 1984. It also alleges that Mr. Jokela had outstanding tax liabilities that had not been paid since at least 1998. The indictment further alleges that both Gary and Marladeen Jokela committed a number of affirmative acts designed to evade the payment of these tax liabilities. For example, after the IRS assessed taxes against Mr. Jokela and sent him numerous notices that the Service intended to levy his wages and bank accounts, the defendants began cashing his paychecks rather than depositing them to their joint bank account. Around the same time, Mrs. Jokela also allegedly opened a separate bank account in her own name. Neither Gary Jokela's name, nor his Social Security number were associated with this new account. The Jokelas used this separate account to pay over \$150,000 in American Express bills between 2002 and 2008.

The indictment alleges that while the Jokelas consistently failed to make any payments to the IRS between 1998 and 2008, they continually spent income on other personal items, including a motor home, a timeshare, and several vacations. They likewise made cash payments on personal items, including their personal vehicles. By using cash and money orders to pay bills, the defendants prevented the IRS from collecting the taxes that were due and owing by Mr. Jokela.

Tax evasion is punishable by up to five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine, while each count of failure to file a return is punishable by up to a year in prison and a \$100,000 fine.

The case was investigated by the Internal Revenue Service—Criminal Investigation, and is being jointly prosecuted by the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Alaska and the United States Department of Justice, Tax Division.

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