



# Department of Justice

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## **FORMER MORTGAGE BROKER AND UNDERWRITER OF FHA GUARANTEED LOANS SENTENCED TO 10 YEARS IN PRISON**

*Donna Woods Lawrence, Owner of Assurety Mortgage Group and Accurate Mortgage Center & Assistants Sentenced in Mortgage and Bankruptcy Fraud Case*

Atlanta, GA - DONNA RENAE WOODS LAWRENCE, 43, of Decatur, Georgia, was sentenced today by United States District Judge Beverly B. Martin on charges of conspiracy to commit mortgage fraud and bankruptcy fraud.

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias said, "This defendant was trusted as a 'gatekeeper' for HUD's guaranteed mortgage loan program. Betraying that trust, she was responsible for hundreds of fraudulent mortgage loans, including some obtained using stolen identities, the erasing of prior security interests, and seven fraudulent bankruptcy filings to stay foreclosures on fraudulently acquired properties. Her misuse of the United States Bankruptcy Court system is of grave concern, especially now while so many lenders need access to their security and legitimate distressed homeowners are seeking second chances through bankruptcy protection."

LAWRENCE was sentenced to 10 years in prison to be followed by 3 years of supervised release, and ordered to pay restitution of \$2,906,176. LAWRENCE pleaded guilty to these charges on May 16, 2007. Judge Martin also sentenced two related co-defendants today. KERWANNA LASHON BENNETT WOODS, 33, of Atlanta, Georgia, was sentenced on a charge of bankruptcy fraud. KERWANNA WOODS was sentenced to serve 1 year, 6 months in prison to be followed by 3 years of supervised release, and ordered to pay restitution of \$503,150; and GWENDOLYN RESHELL WOODS, 41, of Decatur, Georgia, was sentenced on a charge of conspiracy to commit mortgage fraud. GWENDOLYN WOODS was sentenced to 3 years probation beginning with 6 months of house arrest, and ordered to pay restitution of \$238,079. KERWANNA WOODS pleaded guilty on February 2, 2007 and GWENDOLYN WOODS pleaded guilty on January 24, 2007.

According to United States Attorney Nahmias and the information presented in court: LAWRENCE used her company, "Assurety Mortgage," and a stolen social security

number to obtain loan origination and underwriting authority from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for FHA guaranteed loans. Thereafter, LAWRENCE originated hundreds of both FHA guaranteed and conventional loans with false income and employment information, including some where she was the borrower but used a stolen social security number and pretended to be her own twin sister. LAWRENCE also recruited KERWANNA and GWENDOLYN WOODS and other relatives to assume the identities of her minor children and acquire mortgage loans for properties in their names. In order to keep all of the loan proceeds from these new loans, LAWRENCE caused the security interests of prior lenders to be fraudulently erased. Finally, LAWRENCE caused seven separate bankruptcy petitions to be filed to stay foreclosure on a number of the fraudulently acquired properties, with four of the petitions filed under the social security numbers of others. When HUD first learned of this problem and suspended LAWRENCE, she caused a second mortgage brokerage firm, "Accurate Mortgage Group," to be formed and originated an additional 98 fraudulent loans.

This case was investigated by Special Agents of the Office of the Inspector General of the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. The United States Attorney's Office would also like to acknowledge the assistance of the United States Bankruptcy Court and the United States Trustee.

Assistant United States Attorney Gale McKenzie prosecuted the case.

For further information please contact David E. Nahmias (pronounced NAH-me-us), United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is [www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan](http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan).