

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

ST. LOUIS AREA WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO KATRINA FRAUD CHARGES

St. Louis, Missouri: Andrea N. Gholston, pled guilty this morning filing a false claim to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for relief funds available to victims of Hurricane Katrina and assisting another person to do the same thing, United States Attorney Catherine L. Hanaway announced today.

In September 2005, Gholston applied for and received two checks for \$2,000 and \$2,358 from FEMA for Katrina disaster relief, claiming an address in New Orleans. Gholston lives in St. Louis and never resided in New Orleans. In November Gholston assisted Charliscia Brooks in the application which resulted in the receipt of \$10,391 from FEMA. Neither of these defendants were victims of Katrina and were not entitled to any disaster assistance.

“There is no room for fraud in these emergency relief programs,” said Hanaway. “We will continue to identify and prosecute persons who abuse this important relief effort.”

Gholston, 23, of the 7000 block of Hunter Avenue, St. Louis, pled guilty to two felony counts of stealing money from the United States government and one felony count of aiding an abetting another person to steal money from the U.S. government. She appeared before Chief United States District Judge Carol E. Jackson. Gholston now faces a maximum penalty of ten years in prison and/or fines up to \$250,000 when she is sentenced on August 18, 2006.

Hanaway commended the work on the case by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Assistant United States Attorney James E. Crowe, Jr. who is handling the case for the U.S. Attorney’s Office.

Co-defendant Charliscia G. Brooks, 25, of the 6800 block of Pasadena Avenue, St. Louis pled guilty

earlier this month to one felony count of stealing money from the United States government and awaits sentencing.

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 Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division – includes members from the FBI, the Federal Trade Commission, the Postal Inspector's Office, and the Executive Office of the United States Attorneys, among others.