



**Department of Justice  
U.S. Attorney's Office  
Southern District of Texas**

**Donald J. DeGabrielle, Jr. • United States Attorney**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**CONROE RESIDENT CHARGED WITH FRAUDULENTLY OBTAINING  
HURRICANE KATRINA DISASTER UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE**

HOUSTON, TX – Harold Taylor, 33, of Conroe, Texas, has been charged with mail fraud arising from the filing of an allegedly false claim for Hurricane Katrina Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) from the Louisiana Department of Labor. Special Agents of the Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General and the Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, with assistance from the Conroe Police Department, arrested Taylor on Monday, April 24, near his residence in Conroe. Taylor is scheduled to make his initial appearance before United States Magistrate Judge Calvin Botley this afternoon.

This indictment, returned on April 19, 2006, brings the total number of persons charged in the Southern District of Texas with fraud relating to Hurricane Katrina and Rita disaster relief programs to 16, United States Attorney Don DeGabrielle announced today.

DUA provides financial assistance to individuals whose employment or self-employment was lost or interrupted as a direct result of a major disaster declared by the President of the United States. On August 29, 2005, President Bush declared a major disaster for Louisiana as a result of Hurricane Katrina. The Louisiana Department of Labor administers the DUA program for the State of Louisiana and issued debit cards containing the DUA funds to claimants. Funding for the DUA program comes directly from federal funds provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). DUA benefits are available to individuals beginning after the date the major disaster began and for up to 26 weeks after the disaster declaration, as long as their unemployment continues to be a result of the major disaster. The maximum benefit is \$98 per week for 26 weeks, with a maximum possible benefit of \$2,548.

Taylor is accused of devising a scheme to fraudulently obtain DUA funds from the Louisiana Department of Labor. On November 4, 2005, an application for DUA benefits was filed in Taylor's name with the Louisiana Department of Labor, according to allegations in the indictment. The application claimed Taylor, who is not a Hurricane Katrina evacuee, had worked in Louisiana prior to Hurricane Katrina and lost his job as a result of that hurricane. Based on the application, the Louisiana Department of Labor mailed a DUA debit card to Taylor's Conroe residence. Taylor then allegedly activated the card and continued to verify his job search activity with the Louisiana Department of Labor in order to continue receiving benefits on the card.

Upon conviction for mail fraud, a defendant faces a statutory punishment range of up to

20 years imprisonment, without parole, and a fine of up to \$250,000.

This case was investigated by the Department of Labor Office of Inspector General and the Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General and will be prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Gregg Costa.

The United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Texas is a member of the Department of Justice's Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, created by Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales to deter, detect and prosecute unscrupulous individuals who try to take advantage of the Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita disasters. Headed by Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher, the Task Force is comprised of federal, state, and local law enforcement investigating agencies and the United States Attorney's Offices in the Gulf Coast region and nationwide.

Anyone suspecting criminal activity involving disaster assistance programs can make an anonymous report by calling the toll-free Hurricane Relief Fraud Hotline, 1-866-720-5721, 24 hours a day, seven days a week until further notice. Information can also be emailed to the inspector general at [dhsorghotline@dhs.gov](mailto:dhsorghotline@dhs.gov) <<mailto:dhsorghotline@dhs.gov>> or sent by surface mail, with as many details as possible, to:

Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C. 20528  
Attn: Office of Inspector General, Hotline

**An indictment is a formal accusation of criminal conduct, not evidence. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until convicted through due process of law.**

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