



Department of Justice

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TWO ST. LOUIS AREA WOMEN ARE INDICTED ON KATRINA FRAUD CHARGES

St. Louis, Missouri: Two St. Louis area women have been indicted on charges of stealing money from the United States government based on false claims made to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for relief funds available to victims of Hurricane Katrina. One woman was also indicted for assisting the other in these claims, United States Attorney Catherine L. Hanaway announced today.

"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."

ANDREA N. GHOLSTON, 23, of the 7000 block of Hunter Avenue, St. Louis, was indicted by a federal grand jury on two felony counts of stealing money from the United States government and one felony count of aiding and abetting another person to steal money from the U.S. government.

CHARLISCIA G. BROOKS, 25, of the 6800 block of Pasadena Avenue, St. Louis, was indicted by a federal grand jury on one felony count of stealing money from the United States government

If convicted, each count carries a maximum penalty of ten years in prison and/or a fine up to \$250,000.

Although these are separate indictments, Gholston and Brooks are linked. The indictments allege that in September 2005, Gholston applied for and received two checks for \$2,000 and \$2,358 from FEMA for Katrina disaster relief. In November Gholston allegedly 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.

Hanaway commended the work done 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.

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.

The charges set forth in an indictment are merely accusations, and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

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