



Department of Justice

United States Attorney David R. Dugas
Middle District of Louisiana

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2008
WWW.USDOJ.GOV/USAO/LAM

CONTACT: DAVID R. DUGAS
(225) 389-0443
FAX: (225) 389-0561

ANOTHER PLEADS GUILTY, TWO MORE SENTENCED IN BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA, ON DISASTER RELIEF FRAUD CHARGES

BATON ROUGE, LA – United States Attorney David R. Dugas announced that another Louisiana resident pled guilty and two more were sentenced today in federal court on fraud charges related to a hurricane disaster relief program.

DEBRA D. JACKSON, age 39, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, pled guilty today before U.S. District Court Judge Frank J. Polozola to Count One of an indictment charging her with wire fraud. According to the factual basis in the plea agreement, JACKSON filed an application for Hurricane Katrina disaster assistance benefits on August 30, 2005, but FEMA determined that she was not eligible for expedited disaster assistance. On September 19, 2005, JACKSON filed a second application, this time falsely claiming that her primary residence at the time of the storm was on Avenue L in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and that her home and personal property at that address suffered damage as a result of Hurricane Katrina. JACKSON also falsely claimed that Hurricane Katrina caused her to have an essential need for food, clothing, and shelter. In fact, JACKSON was not living at the Avenue L address at the time of the storm, and she did not have storm-related damage at that address. The fraudulent application caused the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to disburse \$2,000 by electronically transferring such funds into a bank account that JACKSON had identified in her fraudulent application for FEMA benefits. The case was investigated by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Inspector General, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General, and the U.S. Secret Service. As a result of her guilty plea to Count One, JACKSON faces a maximum sentence of twenty years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both. As part of the plea agreement, the U.S. Attorney's Office will dismiss Count Two of the indictment when JACKSON is sentenced on Count One.

TRINA R. BURDEN, age 41, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, pled guilty on August 1, 2007, to Count Three of an indictment charging her with making a false and fraudulent claim for disaster assistance benefits. BURDEN was sentenced today by U.S. District Court Judge Frank J. Polozola to three years of probation, \$4,358 in restitution, a \$100 special assessment, and twenty-five hours of community service. The U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General conducted the investigation of this matter.

CORRINE FOSTER, age 52, of Franklin, Louisiana, pled guilty on December 13, 2007, to Count One of an indictment charging her with wire fraud in connection with the filing of a fraudulent application for disaster unemployment benefits. FOSTER was sentenced today by U.S. District Court Judge Frank J. Polozola to five years of probation, \$7,545 in restitution, a \$100 special assessment, and one hundred hours of community service. The U.S. Department of

Labor's Office of Inspector General conducted the investigation of this matter with assistance from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General.

The number of individuals who have been charged in the Middle District of Louisiana with violations related to hurricane disaster relief funds stands at one hundred fifty-five.

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 the FBI, the U.S. Inspectors General community, the U.S. Secret Service, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the Executive Office for United States Attorneys and others.

For further information, contact David R. Dugas, U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Louisiana, or Lyman Thornton, First Assistant U.S. Attorney, at (225) 389-0443. 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 Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force at HKFTF@leo.gov or sent by surface mail, with as many details as possible, to Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-4909.

###