



United States Attorney's Office District of Connecticut Press Release

February 29,
2008

BRISTOL WOMAN SENTENCED TO FIVE YEARS IN FEDERAL PRISON FOR TAX AND MAIL FRAUD

Kevin J. O'Connor, United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut, today announced that LAURA FIGUEROA, 39, of Bristol, Connecticut, was sentenced on Wednesday, February 27, by Senior United States District Judge Ellen Bree Burns in New Haven to 60 months of imprisonment, followed by three years of supervised release. On July 20, 2007, FIGUEROA pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to file false claims for a tax refund and one count of mail fraud.

According to documents filed with the Court and statements made in court, from 2003 until 2005, FIGUEROA was involved in two schemes to defraud the federal and state governments. In the first scheme, FIGUEROA entered into an agreement and conspiracy to defraud the United States by obtaining or assisting others to obtain the payment of false and fraudulent claims for tax refunds. As part of the conspiracy, FIGUEROA and others prepared false Form W-2s and submitted them to commercial tax preparers for fraudulent refunds. FIGUEROA and others also conspired to prepare false tax returns, claiming false refunds by electronically filing returns with false income and tax withholding information. Over the course of the conspiracy, 59 false tax returns were submitted, reflecting three refund claims totaling \$267,541, of which \$181,641 was paid by the Internal Revenue Service.

In the second scheme, FIGUEROA defrauded the Connecticut Department of Labor by filing false claims for unemployment insurance. FIGUEROA and others filed with the Connecticut Department of Labor various forms that established the registration of two companies, *Bad Boyz Cleaning* and *Rough Edges, LLC*, for the purposes of collecting unemployment taxes and the paying of unemployment insurance claims filed by employees. FIGUEROA filed false forms reporting several individuals as employees of those companies, and false wages earned by those individuals, when, in fact, those individuals were not employed by the companies. Thereafter, FIGUEROA and her associates filed fraudulent claims for unemployment insurance compensation on behalf of individuals who were not employed by the companies. The Connecticut Department of Labor paid benefits of approximately \$130,000 in response to fraudulent claims made on behalf of individuals alleged to have been employees of the companies.

FIGUEROA has been ordered to pay restitution to the Internal Revenue Service and the Connecticut Department of Labor in the amounts of \$181,641 and \$130,004, respectively.

Since April 2005, FIGUEROA has been incarcerated on state larceny, credit card fraud, identity theft, and risk of injury to a minor charges. Judge Burns ordered the 60-month federal sentence to commence following FIGUEROA's release from state custody.

This case was investigated by the Internal Revenue Service -- Criminal Investigation Division; the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General; the United States Postal Inspection Service and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Geoffrey M. Stone.

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