

AARP SENIOR NEIGHBOR ISLAND FRAUD CONFERENCES

VIDEO TAPED MESSAGE

August 2, 2006

Aloha, I'm Ed Kubo, the U.S. Attorney for Hawaii. I am sorry that I am unable to make your conference on the Neighbor Island today.

While you are watching this video, I will be either at the White House for a briefing or in Phoenix, Arizona at a scheduled conference.

But, I wanted to address you so that you know how important you are to me, and how careful you should be as a potential victim of Identity Theft.

First, I would like to thank Barbara Stanton and the staff from AARP-Hawaii, for putting on this very important conference to make you aware of the dangers of Identity Theft to our senior population.

This conference shows their concern for issues facing our seniors and this event will make you more aware of these types of crime. Hopefully, the presentations will provide you with valuable information to prevent this crime from happening to you.

Identity theft and the commission of additional crimes using someone else's personal information have grown exponentially in recent years. These crimes are rapidly becoming the crime of choice across the nation, and Hawaii is no exception.

Although Hawaii ranked 33<sup>rd</sup> in the nation for identity theft in 2004 (640), according to the Federal Trade Commission, Hawaii ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in the nation for fraud using someone else's personal information (1,807).

Between July 2002 and July 2003, approximately 7 million people became victims of identity theft in the United States (Gartner Research and Harris Interactive). That equals to over 19,000 (19,178) victims per day, or nearly 800 (799) per hour, or more than 13 (13.3) identity thefts per minute.

Victims now spend an average of 600 hours recovering from this crime, often over a period of years. Three years ago the average was 175 hours of time. This represents an increase of about 2,470%.

Additionally, based on 600 hours — times the victim wages, this equals nearly \$16,000 in lost potential or realized income.

In response to the national concern over identity theft and related financial fraud crimes, Congress passed an Aggravated Identity Theft Law [Identity Theft Penalty Enhancement Act of 2004].

This federal law states that whoever commits certain types of fraud using the identification information of another without their permission, — they shall receive a mandatory 2 year sentence --- in addition to any other sentence imposed for the fraud.

Because of the growing concern in Hawaii about Identity Theft and Fraud, last year at a joint press conference with AARP-Hawaii, I announced the formation of the Hawaii Identity Theft and Fraud Task Force.

This Task Force has investigators from local-state and Federal agencies, including the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the FBI, U.S. Secret Service, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, U.S. Marshal

Service, State Attorney General's Office, county police departments, and other agencies.

This Task Force is aggressively investigating all reported identity theft and related fraud complaints made by our citizens. And, because these predators are victimizing so many here in Hawaii, we have quickly arrested them --- charged them, and had them removed from our communities.

Over the last seven months, we have charged approximately 20 people in federal court for identity theft offenses, utilizing the new aggravated identity theft law.

Among these Defendants are Jeanine Santiago (age 36) and Brendan Sylva (age 31), who victimized our senior citizens.

Both Defendants have now been convicted in federal court with Santiago being sentenced to approximately 5 years in jail, and Sylva being sentenced to approximately 2 years in jail.

In addition, Abraham Martin was recently sentenced to approximately 6 years (72-months) in jail for victimizing a 92 year old senior through Identity Theft.

All of these Defendants will be serving their sentences in a federal penitentiary on the mainland.

These defendants used their victim's personal identification in order to commit fraud, --- and are paying the price with a federal conviction with stiff jail terms.

Anyone who steals another's identity in Hawaii are now doing so at their own risk. I consider these types of crimes to be very serious --- especially when the victims are innocent seniors.

And, I have directed my federal attorneys to take a hard line when ever our seniors are taken advantaged of by these predatory criminals.

This initiative gives us another tool for fighting drug abuse—the underlying cause for many of the crimes associated with identity theft.

Secondly, it will protect vulnerable victims, like our senior population who are especially at risk of losing all of their life long assets to thieves.

Finally, it will protect Hawaii's tourists who may become victims of identity theft while they are visiting our islands.

I intend to continue to make full use of this law, as well as any other federal laws available to target these types of crimes — and these types of criminals.

So, I am very happy to be addressing you today to personally tell you that I care about what happens to you. I care about what happens to your family. And, I care about our communities' safety and welfare.

My generation has a special obligation to protect your generation from harm, and as long as I am the U.S. Attorney, I will continue to fight for your rights, — and I will continue to fight to make Hawaii a safer place to live and to visit.

Thank you for having me; Good luck to you in all of your endeavors; and have a good conference.

Aloha.