



# Department of Justice

United States Attorney Dunn Lampton  
Southern District of Mississippi

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## **BILOXI MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO KATRINA FRAUD**

GULFPORT, Miss. – Mario Leleaux, a Biloxi resident, pled guilty to charges of submitting false claims for Hurricane Katrina disaster assistance funds in U.S. District Court in Gulfport before Federal District Judge Louis Guirola, U.S. Attorney Dunn Lampton announced today. Leleaux admitted filing false claims with FEMA for disaster assistance, stealing government funds from the Mississippi Development Authority Homeowner Grant program, and emergency disaster food stamp fraud. Leleaux received \$16,711.84 from FEMA, \$35,413.32, from the Homeowner Grant Program, and \$792.00 in disaster food stamps, for total disaster assistance of \$52,917.16.

Leleaux claimed he was residing in an Ocean Springs home he owned but rented out while living with his parents in Biloxi. Leleaux faces a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and fines up to \$510,000.

The Mississippi State Auditor Fraud Prevention and Protection Unit investigates allegations of fraud in the Homeowner Grant Program as part of the local task force. State Auditor Phil Bryant stated, "This money was intended for the victims of Katrina. We appreciate the work of the Southern District U.S. Attorney's Office in helping to return these funds. We will continue to be ruthless in our prosecution of people who misuse this money."

Mario Leleaux will be sentenced on December 3, 2007.

In September, 2005, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales created the national 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 for the Criminal Division, Alice S. Fisher, includes members from the FBI, the Federal Trade Commission, the Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, the Postal Inspector's Office and the Executive Office of United States Attorneys, among others.

Pursuant to the Justice Department initiative, a local Katrina Fraud Task Force, consisting of over 20 Federal and State law enforcement agencies, was formed in the Southern District of Mississippi to pursue and prosecute individuals who engage in fraud associated with the hurricanes.

If anyone has information concerning possible fraud being committed during the post-Katrina recovery effort, please call either the DHS-OIG Fraud Hotline at 1-866-720-5721 or the FBI Fraud Hotline at 1-800-225-5324.

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