



U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
Western District of Tennessee*

*800 Federal Building
167 North Main Street
Memphis, Tennessee 38103*

*Telephone 901.544.4231
Fax 901.544.4230
TTY 901.544.3054*

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DATE: November 21, 2001

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:
CONTACT: Leigh Anne Jordon
(901) 544-4231

Former State Employee Sentenced in Tax Return Fraud Scheme

Memphis, TN - Terrell L. Harris, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Tennessee, and Clayton L. Cooper, Special Agent in Charge of IRS-Criminal Investigation, announced today that Tonya D. Ferguson was sentenced to 12 months, 1 day, imprisonment followed by 3 years supervised release. Ferguson was also ordered to pay restitution of \$77,083.78 to the IRS.

Ferguson pled guilty on August 20, 2001, before Judge Julia S. Gibbons to an Information charging her with two counts of filing a false claim against the United States. The charges pertain to two tax returns Ferguson prepared and filed with the IRS for 1999 calendar year that she knew to be false.

According to testimony during the sentencing hearing Ferguson, a former employee of the State of Arkansas Office of Child Support Enforcement, obtained the names and social security numbers used in the scheme through a State of Arkansas

MORE

database. IRS-Criminal Investigation identified 28 returns filed by Ferguson in the refund scheme totaling \$85,556 in refunds that also involved two returns for deceased individuals. Ferguson used four different bank accounts. Ferguson has already paid back \$8,472.22 to IRS from these bank accounts.

During the hearing, Assistant U.S. Attorney Vivian Donelson told the court that there were victims other than the IRS hurt by Ferguson's scheme, citing the two individuals whose husbands were deceased when returns were filed in their names. She told Judge Gibbons that Ferguson filed 28 returns with every intention of gaining as much money as she could.

According to the information, Ferguson prepared a 1999 tax return for James Kennedy claiming a refund of \$6,001. James Kennedy was deceased when the return was filed. The second charge pertained to a 1999 tax return for Wesley Jefferson that claimed a refund in the amount of \$4,689.

This investigation was conducted by IRS-Criminal Investigation. Assistant U.S. Attorney Vivian Donelson represented the government.

#