

**United States Attorney Jim Letten  
Eastern District of Louisiana**

CONTACT: KATHY ENGLISH  
PHONE: (504) 680-3068

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FAX: (504) 589-4978

**TWO INDICTED ON CONSPIRACY TO STEAL  
GOVERNMENT FUNDS DESIGNATED FOR THE  
LOUISIANA ROAD HOME PROGRAM**

**NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA -SHAWNZELL VENSON**, a/k/a Shawn Meyers, age 36, and **WILLIE SMITH**, age 38, both residents of New Orleans, were charged in a one count indictment yesterday by a Federal Grand Jury for conspiracy to steal government funds, announced U. S. Attorney Jim Letten.

The indictment charges both **VENSON** and **SMITH** with conspiracy to steal federal funds intended for grants to homeowners through the Louisiana Road Home Program. According to the indictment from on or about June 7, 2007 until on or about September 1, 2007, **VENSON** and **SMITH** conspired with other, unnamed individuals to have elderly individuals' Road Home grants fraudulently deposited into **VENSON's** and **SMITH's** personal bank accounts at ASI Federal Credit Union. It is alleged that **SMITH** and **VENSON** and their co-conspirators changed the bank routing instructions in the recipients' closing documentation prepared at First American Title Insurance Company so that the grants would be directly transferred to **VENSON's** and **SMITH's** bank accounts. According to the indictment, **SMITH** and **VENSON** would then call the bank and pose as relatives of the grantees. Over the course of the conspiracy, it is alleged that **SMITH** and **VENSON** attempted to steal over \$600,000 in government funds intended for five different, elderly Road Home recipients.

If convicted, **SMITH** and **VENSON** face a maximum term of imprisonment of five (5) years, a \$250,000 fine, and three years of supervised release following any term of imprisonment.

U. S. Attorney Letten reiterated that the indictment is merely a charge and that the guilt of the defendants must be proven beyond a reasonable doubt.

The case was investigated by agents with Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Inspector General, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General, and Social Security Administration Office of Inspector General. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Emily Greenfield.

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