



Department of Justice

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**SENTENCING IN BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA,
ON BANKRUPTCY FRAUD CHARGE**

BATON ROUGE, LA – United States Attorney David R. Dugas announced that MELISSA L. FONTENOT, age 47, of Denham Springs, Louisiana, was sentenced in federal court yesterday by U.S. District Court Judge James J. Brady on a bankruptcy fraud charge. FONTENOT was sentenced to a term of imprisonment of eighteen months with three years of supervised release and a fine of \$1,500.

FONTENOT was convicted on August 9, 2006, under a bill of information that charged her with one count of bankruptcy fraud, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 157. According to the bill of information, FONTENOT, in February 2004, filed a petition for bankruptcy relief in her and her husband's name in the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Middle District of Louisiana. When the bankruptcy commenced, a payroll deduction was put into place with the defendant's husband's employer. FONTENOT forged a court order purportedly issued by a U.S. Bankruptcy Court judge. The fraudulent order directed the defendant's husband's employer to stop the payroll deduction and to return any such payments to the debtors. The order also falsely claimed that the bankruptcy had been modified to Chapter 7.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation with the assistance of the U.S. Trustee, and was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Richard L. Bourgeois, Jr.

U.S. Attorney Dugas stated, "Any fraud on the court can impair the operation of the judicial system, but the combination of bankruptcy fraud executed through the forgery of a court order, threatens the integrity of the entire judicial process. I commend the U.S. Trustee and the FBI for their vigilance in detecting and investigating this matter."

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