



Department of Justice

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Eastern District of Louisiana

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HARAHAN MAN SENTENCED FOR THEFT OF FEDERAL FUNDS

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA – VERNON PONDER, age 63, a resident of Harahan, was sentenced today by U. S. District Judge Mary Ann Vial Lemmon to serve twelve (12) months imprisonment for theft of government funds, announced U.S. Attorney Jim Letten. **PONDER** is to serve the first half of his prison term in a half way house, and the second half of his prison term on home confinement. In addition to the term of imprisonment, Judge Lemmon ordered that **PONDER** be placed on two (2) years of supervised release following the term of imprisonment, during which time the defendant will be under federal supervision and risks an additional term of imprisonment should he violate any terms of his supervised release. **PONDER** was also ordered to pay a fine of \$10,000.00, and to pay full restitution to the government.

According to court documents, **PONDER**, whose primary residence was in Harahan, Louisiana at the time of Hurricane Katrina, falsely represented that his vacation home located in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi was his primary residence when he applied for disaster assistance funds from the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA), the Small Business Administration (SBA), and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (“FEMA”) after the storm. As a direct result of his actions, the MDA provided **PONDER** with a grant totaling \$100,000.00 to repair his home. **PONDER** also received a loan from the SBA in the amount of \$10,000.00 for home repairs, and \$7,102.63 in disaster assistance from FEMA.

The case was investigated by the Office of Inspector General for HUD, SBA, and FEMA. The case was being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Andrea Jones of the Mississippi U.S. Attorney’s Office and Spiro Latsis of the New Orleans U.S. Attorney’s Office.

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