

# News Release

U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney  
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For Release:

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Steven M. Dettelbach, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio, today announced that a federal grand jury in Cleveland, Ohio, returned indictments against eight individuals for theft of public money, from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which was designated for individuals displaced as a result of Hurricane Katrina.

The Indicted, including their ages, are as follows:

Valory McElrath - age 48

Betty Sims - age 47

Vernita Bell - age 48

Tamara Grant - age 44

Jujuan Norman - age 39

Darnell Brewer - age 34

Charlotte Thompson - age 53 and

Randolph Everett - age 48.

The individuals indicted contacted FEMA and made applications claiming they were displaced from the New Orleans area as a result of Hurricane Katrina. In fact, those indicted have never

lived outside the Northern District of Ohio. The total amount of funds disbursed to those indicted was \$57,908.15.

The offense of theft of public money carries a maximum potential penalty of ten years imprisonment and a fine of \$250,000. These indictments result from investigations conducted by the Cleveland office of the United States Secret Service, United States Postal Inspection Service and the Department of Homeland Security, Office of the Inspector General. These cases are being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Henry F. DeBaggis and John D. Sammon.

If convicted, the defendants' sentence will be determined by the court after review of factors unique to this case, including the defendants' prior criminal record, if any, the defendants' role in the offense and the characteristics of the violation. In all cases the sentence will not exceed the statutory maximum and in most cases it will be less than the maximum.

An indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. A defendant is entitled to a fair trial in which it will be the government's burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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