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Wednesday, January 18, 2017

## Palmetto Woman Sentenced To Prison For Identity Theft And Public Benefits Fraud

Tampa, Florida – U.S. District Judge James D. Whittemore has sentenced Peggy Washington (36, Palmetto) to three years and three months in federal prison for aggravated identity theft, wire fraud, and making false statements to government agencies. The Court also entered a money judgment in the amount of \$36,355.93, which were traceable proceeds of the offenses. In addition, Washington was ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$48,926.93 to the defrauded government agencies.

According to court documents, Washington engaged in several different fraudulent schemes targeting recipients of public benefits programs and the agencies that administer those programs. She and her accomplices obtained stolen personal identifying information (PII) belonging to Social Security and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients and then opened debit card accounts in those recipients' names. Washington electronically diverted the recipients' Social Security and SNAP benefit payments into the new accounts, and then withdrew them for her own use. In another scheme, Washington used stolen PII to file fraudulent tax returns. She then received the refund checks and cashed them for her own use. Washington also submitted Section 8 housing applications that misrepresented and concealed her assets, resulting in a significant overpayment of benefits.

This case was investigated by the Social Security Administration, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Internal Revenue Service – Criminal Investigation, and the Department of Agriculture. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Eric K. Gerard and Department of Justice Trial Attorney Timothy Loper.



**Topic(s):**  
Financial Fraud  
Identity Theft  
StopFraud

**Component(s):**  
USAO - Florida, Middle

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