

Alton woman indicted for government benefits fraud

February 12 2016 4:25 PM



Ebony J. Smith, 37, of Alton, Illinois, was indicted by a federal grand jury on Jan. 20, 2016, on two counts of Theft of Government Funds and two counts of false statement, the Acting United States Attorney for the Southern District of Illinois, James L. Porter, announced today. Smith was arraigned on the charges this week.

If convicted of theft of government funds, Smith faces a maximum penalty of ten years in prison, a \$250,000 fine, and three years of supervised release as to each count. If convicted of False Statement, Smith faces a maximum penalty of five years in prison, a \$250,000 fine, and three years of supervised release as to each count.

The indictment alleges that from around November 2001, continuing to around November 2011, Smith willfully and knowingly did steal, purloin, and convert for her own use money belonging to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, having a value of approximately \$88,000, by obtaining HUD Housing Choice Voucher

Program rent subsidies for a home in which she had an ownership interest when she knew she was not entitled to the rent subsidies due to her ownership interest in the property.

The indictment further alleges that from November 2001, continuing to around November 2011, Smith willfully and knowingly did steal, purloin, and convert to her own use money of the Social Security Administration, having a value of approximately \$72,000, by obtaining supplemental social security income while also receiving unreported assistance from the HUD Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Smith is also alleged to have made materially false statements to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Social Security Administration in the HUD “Tenant Annual Renewal Personal Declaration” and the SSA “Redetermination Summary for Determining Continuing Eligibility for Supplemental Security Income Payments” forms when she did not disclose her ownership interest in the real estate for which she was receiving the rent subsidies and she did not disclose to the SSA the rent assistance she was receiving through the HUD Housing Choice Voucher Program.

An indictment is a formal charge against a defendant. Under the law, a defendant is presumed to be innocent of a charge and is entitled to a fair trial at which the United States must prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.