

U.S. District Court Announces 21-Count Indictment For East Alton Woman With Stealing Supplemental Security Income ('SSI') Funds

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EAST ST. LOUIS - The U.S. District Court in East St. Louis today announced a federal grand jury has returned a 21-count indictment charging Melissa D. Wasylak, 48, of East Alton, with stealing Supplemental Security Income (“SSI”) funds that were intended for her disabled daughter.

The indictment also charges Wasylak with wire fraud and making false statements on forms submitted to the Social Security Administration (“SSA”). The SSA administers the SSI program, which provides a minimum level of income to aged, blind, and disabled individuals with limited resources.

For disabled children, SSI benefits are paid to a representative payee, who is responsible for handling the funds and reporting to the SSA. Federal law requires that all SSI funds must be used for the benefit of the disabled child. Wasylak applied for her disabled daughter to receive SSI benefits and was appointed as her daughter’s representative payee.

According to the indictment, in 2008, Wasylak’s daughter stopped living with her and went to live with Wasylak’s ex-husband. Despite this fact, Wasylak continued to receive her daughter’s SSI funds. The indictment charges that Wasylak did not use those funds for her daughter’s expenses, but instead used the SSI money to pay her own personal expenses.

This allegedly continued until the situation was reported to the SSA in May of 2019. Wire fraud is punishable by up to 20 years in prison. The maximum punishment for theft of government funds is 10 years’ imprisonment. Making a false statement on a Social Security form carries a five-year statutory maximum term of imprisonment.

Each of the charges comes with a possible fine of up to \$250,000, and Wasylak could also be ordered to pay restitution. An indictment is merely a formal charge against a defendant. Under the law, the defendant is presumed to be innocent of the charges until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt to the satisfaction of a jury.

Wasylak is scheduled to be arraigned by United States Magistrate Judge Gilbert C. Sison on Monday, April 5, 2021, at 10:00 a.m., at the federal courthouse in East St. Louis. The investigation was conducted by the SSA – Office of the Inspector General. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Scott A. Verseman.