



# **PRESS RELEASE**

## **Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation Cincinnati Field Office *Special Agent in Charge Kathy A. Enstrom***

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### **LOCAL WOMAN SENTENCED TO 5 YEARS IN ID THEFT AND TAX REFUND SCAM**

CINCINNATI – Bridgette Jones, 34, of Cincinnati, Ohio, was sentenced to 61 months in prison, three years of supervised release, and was ordered to pay \$477,490 in restitution to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for her role in a scheme to defraud the IRS by filing false claims for federal income tax refunds. In April 2013, Jones pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to submit false claims for federal income tax refunds with the IRS and to one count of aggravated identity theft.

Carter M. Stewart, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio and Kathy A. Enstrom, Special Agent in Charge, Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation, Cincinnati Field Office, announced the sentence handed down by U.S. District Judge Sandra S. Beckwith.

According to court documents, between January 2011 and September 2012 Jones conspired with others in a scheme to obtain false claims for income tax refunds from the IRS by electronically filing false 2010 and 2011 federal income tax returns claiming at least \$654,550 in refunds that they knew they were not entitled. For restitution purposes, the total actual loss associated with this conspiracy is \$477,490.

Jones' primary role in the scheme was to prepare and submit false returns to the IRS using stolen identities. Co-conspirator Ellis Maurice Scott unlawfully obtained the individual names, dates of birth, and social security numbers used to prepare and file the false income tax returns. Jones and Scott kept lists of these individual's identities to be used in filing false income tax returns for multiple income tax years. These same lists were also used to track the status of the individual's income tax return and income tax refund. Jones had in her possession the names, dates of birth, and social security numbers of over 300 individuals and information related to the filing of corresponding income tax returns filed with those individuals' stolen identities.

Jones used these stolen identities to prepare and file false income tax returns from various locations in Cincinnati, Ohio. These income tax returns contained fabricated information as it related to the taxpayer, including addresses, dependents, occupations, income amounts, and education expenses. The inclusion of this false information often qualified the taxpayer listed on the income tax return to receive the Earned Income Tax Credit and the American Opportunity Tax Credit.

For example, Jones filed a false income tax return using the stolen identity of a particular individual. Jones then received the income tax refund in the form of an U.S. Treasury check, which was cashed at

ACE Cash Express in Cincinnati, Ohio. Records from a local rehabilitation center that included this individual's personal identification information were found in Jones' apartment.

Jones also directed the method in which the income tax refund would be received, to include U.S. Treasury checks and prepaid debit cards that were mailed to addresses controlled by Scott and others in this conspiracy.

Jones also provided U.S. Treasury checks to Latasha Hampton, who had been recruited by Scott, for cashing at ACE Cash Express and collected the proceeds from those checks. In addition, Jones used prepaid debit cards in the names of other individuals, without their consent, to withdraw income tax refund monies. Specifically, Jones withdrew cash at a Wal-Mart using a prepaid debit card containing the income tax refund associated with an income tax return filed in the name of a 90 year old individual residing in a local senior assisted living center.

In April 2013, Ellis Scott, 32, of Cincinnati pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to submit false claims for federal income tax refunds with the IRS and two counts of aggravated identity theft. Scott is scheduled to be sentenced on December 2, 2013.

In April 2013, Latasha Hampton, 34, of Cincinnati pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to submit false claims for federal income tax refunds with the IRS and one count of forging endorsements on U.S. Treasury checks. Hampton is scheduled to be sentenced on October 16, 2013.

In March 2013 Marnay Love, 34, of Cincinnati pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to submit false claims for federal income tax refunds with the IRS. Love is scheduled to be sentence on October 21, 2013.

On September 10, 2013 Dione Howard, 33, of Cincinnati was sentenced to twelve months and one day in prison, three years of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$30,129 in restitution to the IRS for conspiring to submit false claims for federal income tax refunds with the IRS and for the unlawful use of a means of identification.

"Today's announcement exemplifies IRS Special Agents' intense focus on the rigorous pursuit of identity theft and refund fraud," said Kathy A. Enstrom, Special Agent in Charge, IRS Criminal Investigation, Cincinnati Field Office. "Bridgette Jones perpetuated an elaborate scheme driven by insatiable greed and a blatant disregard for the tremendous damage inflicted on innocent victims. Be assured that IRS Criminal Investigation, together with our partners at the U.S. Attorney's Office, will hold those who engage in similar behavior fully accountable."

These cases are being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jessica W. Knight and were investigated by special agents of IRS-Criminal Investigation.

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