



PRESS RELEASE

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

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LAST OF FIVE DEFENDANTS SENTENCED TO 102 MONTHS FOR PARTICIPATING IN TAX REFUND SCAM

CINCINNATI – Ellis Maurice Scott, 32, of Cincinnati, Ohio was sentenced to 102 months in prison, 3 years of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$477,490 in restitution to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) on one count of committing conspiracy to submit false claims for federal income tax refunds with the IRS and two counts of aggravated identity theft. Scott pleaded guilty to these offenses in April 2013.

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 Chief U.S. District Judge Sandra S. Beckwith.

According to court documents, between January 2011 and September 2012 Ellis Scott, Bridgette Jones, Latasha Hampton, Marnay Love and Dione Howard, participated 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.

Scott unlawfully purchased names, Social Security numbers and dates of births of individuals from a variety of sources, including employees at nursing homes and hospitals. Scott shared these stolen identities with Jones in late 2011.

On or about August 10, 2012, Jones had more than 300 stolen identities in her possession and Scott had more than 40 stolen identities. Scott sold at least 18 sets of stolen identities to Howard. 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.

These false 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.

Scott, Jones and Howard received the income tax refunds in the form of U.S. Treasury checks and prepaid debits cards that were mailed to addresses controlled by Scott or Howard.

Jones also provided U.S. Treasury checks to Latasha Hampton, who had been recruited by Scott, for cashing at ACE Cash Express, a check-cashing establishment in Cincinnati, Ohio, and collected the proceeds from those checks.

Love worked as a manager at ACE Cash Express. Love sometimes cashed the income tax refund checks under account names that did not match the individual on the check. Once cashed, Love took a portion of the income tax refund check as a fee and gave the remaining money to Latasha Hampton. Hampton and Love assisted in the cashing of at least 43 U.S. Treasury income tax refund checks worth \$84,090.

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.

On September 16, 2013 Bridgette Jones, 34, of Cincinnati was sentenced to 61 months in prison, three years of supervised release, and was ordered to pay \$477,490 in restitution to the IRS for conspiring to submit false claims for federal income tax refunds with the IRS and for committing aggravated identity theft.

On October 16, 2013, Latasha Hampton, 34, of Cincinnati was sentenced to ten months in prison, three years of supervised release, and was ordered to pay \$84,090 in restitution to the IRS for conspiring to submit false claims for federal income tax refunds with the IRS and for forging endorsements on U.S. Treasury checks.

On October 21, 2013, Marnay Love, 34, of Cincinnati was ordered to pay \$84,090 in restitution to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), \$17,350 in restitution to ACE Cash Express and serve eight months in prison followed by three years of supervised release for conspiring to defraud the IRS by filing false claims for federal income tax refunds.

"Individuals who commit refund fraud and identity theft of this magnitude and with this degree of trickery, dishonesty and deceit, deserve to be punished to the fullest extent of the law," said Kathy A. Enstrom, Acting Special Agent in Charge, IRS Criminal Investigation, Cincinnati Field Office.

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

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