



# PRESS RELEASE

## Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation *Chief Richard Weber*

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IRS – Criminal Investigation

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### **Alabama Resident and U.S. Postal Worker Pleads Guilty for Involvement in Stolen Identity Tax Refund Fraud Ring**

An Alabama resident and U.S. Postal Service (USPS) employee pleaded guilty today in the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Alabama to conspiring to defraud the United States with respect to false claims, aggravated identity theft and embezzling mail, Acting Assistant Attorney General Caroline D. Ciralo of the Justice Department's Tax Division and U.S. Attorney George L. Beck Jr. of the Middle District of Alabama announced.

According to court documents, between June 2012 and December 2013, Elizabeth Grant, 42, of Seale, Alabama, conspired with others to obtain fraudulent tax refunds by filing false federal income tax returns using stolen identities. For a fee, Grant provided co-conspirators with addresses along her mail delivery route to use in filing false tax returns. Grant then retrieved the fraudulent tax refund checks from the mail and delivered the checks to her co-conspirators. The scheme resulted in the filing of more than 700 false returns claiming more than \$1.5 million in refunds.

Several co-conspirators, including Tracy Mitchell and Keshia Lanier, have already pleaded guilty and were sentenced for their roles in this scheme. On August 7, Mitchell was sentenced to 159 months in prison. On September 25, Lanier was sentenced to 180 months in prison.

Grant faces a statutory maximum sentence of 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine for the conspiracy count and five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine for the count of embezzling mail. Grant also faces a mandatory minimum sentence of two years in prison for aggravated identity theft, which is in addition to the sentence she receives for the other counts, as well as a potential \$125,000 fine.

Acting Assistant Attorney General Ciralo and U.S. Attorney Beck Jr. commended special agents of IRS-Criminal Investigation and the USPS Office of the Inspector General, who investigated the case and Trial Attorneys Michael C. Boteler, Gregory Bailey and Robert J. Boudreau of the Tax Division and Assistant U.S. Attorney Jonathan Ross of the Middle District of Alabama, who are prosecuting this case.

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