

Department of Justice

United States Attorney Stan Harris
Southern District of Mississippi

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: SHEILA

WILBANKS

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2009
www.usdoj.gov/usao/mss

PHONE: (601) 965-4480
FAX: (601) 965-4409

FORMER GULFPORT MAYOR PLEADS GUILTY AND IS SENTENCED FOR KATRINA FRAUD

GULFPORT, Miss. – The former Mayor of Gulfport, Mississippi, **Gregory Brent Warr** entered a plea of guilty and was sentenced today for felony Katrina fraud, announced Stan Harris, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Mississippi, and Richard Skinner, Inspector General for the United States Department of Homeland Security.

Gregory Brent Warr entered a guilty plea before Senior United States District Judge Walter J. Gex, III, to one felony count of stealing U.S. Government funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Following his plea of guilty, Warr was sentenced to three years of supervised probation, 100 hours of community service, and restitution to FEMA of \$9,558.00. In addition, a judgment of forfeiture was entered against Warr in the amount of \$9,558.00. All of the remaining counts against Warr, and his wife Laura Warr, were dismissed in consideration for his plea of guilty.

As part of his guilty plea, Warr admitted in federal court to the accuracy of the factual basis set forth by the Government regarding his criminal conduct. Warr admitted that on September 14, 2005, co-defendant Laura Warr registered with the Federal Emergency Management Agency for Katrina Disaster Assistance claiming that she, her husband and their two children were living at 1814 Beach Drive, Gulfport, Mississippi when the proof would show that they did not.

On November 26, 2005, the defendant, Gregory Brent Warr, met with a FEMA inspector at 1814 Beach Drive and represented that, at the time of Hurricane Katrina, the house was occupied by the Warr family. As a result of these fraudulent actions, the Warrs received three payments from FEMA: 1) \$2,000.00 on September 15, 2005; 2) \$2,358.00 on October 18, 2005; and, 3) \$5,200.00 on November 29, 2005; for a total of \$9,558.00 to which they were not entitled.

U.S. Attorney Stan Harris noted that the Government actively pursues all bona fide cases of Katrina fraud regardless of an offender's background or occupation. "It is of particular concern when a public official — in this case, then a sitting mayor — engages in theft through deceit, of government funds for personal benefit. This case is an example that no one is above the law," said Harris.

This case was investigated by the Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General, the Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Inspector General, and the State Auditor's Office. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Annette Williams and Mary Helen Wall prosecuted the case for the Government.

In September 2005, the U.S. Department of Justice created the national Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, designed to deter, investigate and prosecute disaster-related federal crimes such as charity fraud, identity theft, procurement fraud and insurance fraud. The Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force is chaired by Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division, Lanny A. Breuer, and includes members from the Small Business Administration Office of Inspector General, Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Federal Trade Commission, the Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, the Office of the U.S. Postal Inspector and the Executive Office of United States Attorneys, among others.

If anyone has information concerning possible fraud being committed during the post-Katrina recovery effort, please call either the Department of Homeland Security - Office of Inspector General Fraud Hotline at 1-866-720-5721 or the FBI Fraud Hotline at 1-800-225-5324.

###