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## MADIGAN, IDES CRACK DOWN ON UNEMPLOYMENT FRAUD

### ***Attorney General Charges 14 for Illegally Collecting More Than \$400,000 in Unemployment Benefits***

**Chicago** — Attorney General Lisa Madigan and the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) today announced indictments of 14 Chicago area defendants, alleging they defrauded the state when they knowingly collected more than \$400,000 in unemployment benefits even though they were employed.

The sweep was the result of investigations by IDES and the Attorney General's office that discovered the defendants were repeatedly certifying they were unemployed in order to collect weekly benefits in spite of already being employed.

"These defendants collected unemployment benefits while they were simultaneously collecting a paycheck," Madigan said. "Prosecuting these cases deters fraud and ensures the integrity of the unemployment insurance program to help the unemployed who need the resources as they search for new employment."

In April 2012, IDES and the Attorney General's office partnered to pursue criminal prosecution of unemployment fraud. These announced indictments are the first set of criminal charges resulting from that partnership.

"This joint effort is a direct result our emphasis to fight waste, fraud and abuse," IDES Director Jay Rowell said. "Unemployment insurance benefits are designed to help hard-working individuals and the small businesses they patronize survive an economic crisis. Stealing money from those who play by the rules hurts our economy and cannot be tolerated."

Madigan filed charges of theft, a Class 1 felony punishable by four to 15 years in prison, and state benefits fraud and wire fraud, Class 3 felonies punishable by two to five years in prison, against 14 defendants.

In each case, the defendant falsely verified they were unemployed through the IDES telephone or on-line verification system to access taxpayer-funded assistance during their supposed unemployment. Investigations by IDES and Madigan's office revealed the defendants were, in fact, employed and should not have received benefits or the level of benefits they claimed.

Fraudulent claims made by the defendants spanned from 2009 through 2011. In the most egregious cases, several defendants obtained more than \$40,000 in fraudulent benefits.

Prosecutors charged nine defendants in Cook County, alleging:

- Donyea Abrams, 33, of Chicago, collected more than \$20,000 in fraudulent benefits;
- Chaya Boone, 33, of Chicago, collected more than \$29,000 in fraudulent benefits;
- Diana Flemons, 48, of Matteson, collected more than \$27,000 in fraudulent benefits;
- Sheila Jackson, 48, of Richton Park, collected more than \$32,000 in fraudulent benefits;
- Carol Jones, 51, of Chicago, collected more than \$24,000 in fraudulent benefits;
- Mark Meloy, 56, of Orland Hills, collected more than \$20,000 in fraudulent benefits;
- Mattie Moore, 46, of Chicago, collected more than \$48,000 in fraudulent benefits;
- Veronica Villar, 40, of Chicago, collected more than \$24,000 in fraudulent benefits; and
- Alan Weatherspoon, 52, of Midlothian, collected more than \$23,000 in fraudulent benefits.

### **Will, Kankakee, Champaign County Charges:**

Additionally, in Will County, Thomas Aggen, 44, of Lockport, was charged for collecting more than \$34,000 in fraudulent benefits, and Anthony Osei, 57, and Mohammed Azher, 45, both of Bolingbrook, were charged with each collecting more than \$27,000 in fraudulent benefits.

Tony Williams, 40, of Bradley, was charged in Kankakee County for collecting more than \$44,000 in fraudulent benefits. In Champaign County, defendant Bobby Crowe, 38, of Urbana, was also charged for allegedly collecting more than \$34,000 in fraudulent benefits.

Assistant Attorneys General Robin Murphy and John Walz are handling the cases for Madigan's Special Prosecutions Bureau.

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