

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AG STRANGE ANNOUNCES CONVICTIONS FOR CHARGES RELATED TO THEFT AND FRAUDULENT OIL SPILL CLAIMS

(MONTGOMERY)--Attorney General Luther Strange today announced seven felony convictions related to fraudulent claims for compensation related to the BP oil spill.

These cases arise from evidence presented by the Attorney General's Office to a Mobile County grand jury on May 15, 2013. Several defendants were charged with creating and submitting false documentation to BP claiming that they suffered lost income due to the oil spill, and most received funds from BP as a result of fraudulent claims.

On September 17, the following defendants pleaded guilty and received sentences of imprisonment which were suspended for terms of probation upon the condition that they pay court costs and fees as well as restitution to BP for any funds they received fraudulently. First-degree theft of property is a class B felony; second-degree theft of property and second-degree possession of forged instruments are class C felonies.

- Nicolas Shane Graham of Mobile, first-degree theft of property, sentenced to two years and ordered to pay \$4,400 in restitution;
- Derek J. Strong of Irvington, first-degree theft of property, sentenced to five years and ordered to pay \$5,760 in restitution;
- Jessica Danille Verrett of Irvington, first-degree theft of property, sentenced to five years and ordered to pay \$4,800 in restitution;
- James Carlton Gibbons of Chickasaw, first-degree theft of property, sentenced to five years and ordered to pay \$2,760 in restitution;

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- Arthur Thomas Isham Jr. of Bayou La Batre, second-degree theft of property, one year, ordered to pay \$2,500 in restitution;
- Marie Nicole Williams of Theodore, second-degree possession of a forged instrument, two years, (no restitution because she did not actually receive funds); and
- Toni Leann Strong of Theodore, second-degree possession of a forged instrument, two years, (no restitution because she did not actually receive funds).

In addition to the convictions announced today, charges are pending against three other defendants who were indicted* by the grand jury in May:

- Patrick Isham of Irvington, two counts of second-degree possession of a forged instrument;
- Delisha Purdy of Theodore, first-degree theft of property, eight counts of first-degree criminal conspiracy to commit theft of property, three counts of second-degree possession of a forged instrument;
- Rhonda Howard of Mobile, first-degree criminal conspiracy to commit theft of property, first-degree theft of property, and three counts of second-degree possession of a forged instrument;

If convicted, the remaining defendants face potential penalties of two to 20 years imprisonment and fines of up to \$30,000 for each count that is a class B felony, and one to 10 years imprisonment and fines of up to \$15,000 for each count that is a class C felony.

Attorney General Strange commended Assistant Attorney General James H. Rutter III of his Criminal Trials Division, who presented the cases to the grand jury, and Special Agents of the Attorney General's Investigations Division. He thanked the Mobile County Sheriff's Office for its assistance in serving warrants. Investigation of this matter is ongoing. No further information about the investigation or about the defendants' alleged crimes other than that stated in the indictments may be released at this time.

**An indictment is merely an accusation. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.*