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Thursday, February 15, 2018

Texas Man Sentenced to Prison for His Role in Stealing Funds Intended to Feed Hungry Children

LITTLE ROCK—Cody Hiland, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Arkansas, announced today that United States District Court Judge Kristine G. Baker sentenced Waymon Weems, 37, of Rockwall, Texas, to federal prison for his role in a widespread scheme to steal money intended for feeding children in low income areas in Arkansas.

Judge Baker sentenced Weems, who pleaded guilty to conspiring to commit wire fraud on October 4, 2016, to 15 months' imprisonment, to be followed by two years of supervised release. He was also ordered to pay \$697,236.41 in restitution.

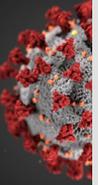
The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) feeding programs in Arkansas are administered through the Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS). Sponsors who want to participate in the feeding programs must submit an application to DHS for approval. After they are approved, they can provide meals as part of the feeding programs and they are reimbursed for the eligible meals they serve.

Weems was a sponsor for a feeding program through an organization called "SJ&B Outreach." Weems had three approved feeding site locations, which were located in Wynne, Forrest City, and Marianna. Between all three sites, he claimed as many as 872 children were fed each day. No children were ever actually fed at the Forrest City site, and Weems now says that approximately 10 to 50 children were fed at the other two sites. Weems was recruited to participate in the scheme by Anthony Waits. Waits's wife, Gladys Waits, worked for DHS and approved Weems's application. Weems paid Anthony Waits approximately 40% of the \$697,236.41 Weems received in the scheme.



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Weems is the 15th defendant sentenced who was charged in connection with a scheme to fraudulently obtain USDA program funds intended to feed children in low income areas. Other defendants include: Kattie Jordan (63 months imprisonment on March 15, 2016); Reuben Nims (21 months imprisonment on November 2, 2016); Tonique Hatton (108 months' imprisonment on January 4, 2017); James Franklin (24 months' imprisonment on January 10, 2017); Maria Nelson, (30 months' imprisonment on January 31, 2017); Michael Lee (30 months' imprisonment on May 1, 2017); Christopher Nichols (3 years' probation on May 16, 2017); Gladys Waits (108 months' imprisonment on July 17, 2017); Alexis Young (18 months' imprisonment on August 18, 2017); Erica Warren (18 months' imprisonment on August 18, 2017); Francine Leon (34 months imprisonment on September 21, 2017); Anthony Waits (175 months' imprisonment on October 20, 2017); Jacqueline Mills (150 months imprisonment on December 6, 2017); and Dorothy Harper (33 months imprisonment on January 9, 2018).

Debora Washington was indicted on conspiracy and fraud charges related to this scheme on February 1, 2018, and she is scheduled to be arraigned on these charges next week. Her case will be handled by United States District Judge J. Leon Holmes. Also, Elbert Harris pleaded guilty to wire fraud, and Nigel Hall has pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit wire fraud in relation to the same feeding programs. Both are awaiting sentencing.

The investigation is still ongoing and continues to be conducted by the USDA–Office of Inspector General, IRS–Criminal Investigations, and the FBI. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Jana Harris, Allison W. Bragg, and Cameron McCree.

If you are aware of any fraudulent activity regarding feeding programs, please email that information to USAARE.FeedingProgramFraud@usdoj.gov.

Topic(s):
Public Corruption

Component(s):
USAO - Arkansas, Eastern

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