



Alabama Department of Labor

News Release

For Immediate Release: January 22, 2014

Alabama Department of Labor Obtaining Convictions for Unemployment Compensation Fraud

MONTGOMERY – Alabama Department of Labor Commissioner Tom Surtees announced today that the Department has successfully prosecuted several Alabamians for unemployment compensation fraud. The following individuals were charged with violating the Alabama Unemployment Compensation Law by making false statements in claims for benefits:

- Joseph Burt, of Talladega, was tried in Talladega County District Court on January 9, 2014. An investigation by Labor's Benefit Payment Control Section determined that Burt received a total of \$7,853 in benefits to which he was not entitled.

Burt pled guilty and was sentenced to pay court costs and restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally. His sentence will be based on his ability to pay restitution.

- Alfonia Murray, of Tuscaloosa, was tried in Tuscaloosa County District Court on January 8, 2014. An investigation by Labor's Benefit Payment Control Section determined that Murray received a total of \$2,372 in benefits to which he was not entitled.

Murray pled guilty and was sentenced to 90 days in jail, which was suspended for two years pending behavior of the defendant. He was also ordered to pay court costs and restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally.

- Sharon Leatherwood, of Tuscaloosa, was tried in Tuscaloosa County District Court on January 8, 2014. An investigation by Labor's Benefit Payment Control Section determined that Leatherwood received a total of \$1,870 in benefits to which she was not entitled.

Leatherwood pled guilty and was sentenced to 90 days in jail, which was suspended for two years pending behavior of the defendant. She was also ordered to pay court costs and restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally.

- Maurice Dwayne Poellnitz, of Mobile, was tried in Mobile County District Court on January 15, 2014. An investigation by Labor's Benefit Payment Control Section determined that Poellnitz received a total of \$2,465 in benefits to which he was not entitled.

Poellnitz pled guilty and was sentenced to 90 days in jail, which was suspended for two years pending restitution, and two years of unsupervised probation. He was also ordered to pay court costs and restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally.

- David Brown, of Birmingham, was tried in Tuscaloosa County District Court on January 8, 2014. An investigation by Labor's Benefit Payment Control Section determined that Brown received a total of \$5,919 in benefits to which he was not entitled.

Brown pled guilty and was sentenced to 90 days in jail, which was suspended for two years pending behavior of the defendant. He was also ordered to pay court costs and restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally.

- Kevin Watts, of Wadley, was tried in Randolph County District Court on December 4, 2013. An investigation by Labor's Benefit Payment Control Section determined that Watts received a total of \$1,890 in benefits to which he was not entitled.

Watts pled guilty and was sentenced to 30 days in jail, which was suspended for one year pending restitution and one year of unsupervised probation. He was also sentenced to 24 hours of community service and ordered to pay court costs and restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally.

- Sheila Latham, of Decatur, was tried in Morgan County District Court on January 16, 2014. An investigation by Labor's Benefit Payment Control Section determined that Latham received a total of \$2,764 in benefits to which she was not entitled.

Latham pled guilty and was sentenced to six months in jail, which was suspended for two years. She was also fined \$500 and ordered to pay court costs and restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally.

- Erika Rollins, of Tuscaloosa, was tried in Tuscaloosa County District Court on December 11, 2013. An investigation by Labor's Benefit Payment Control Section determined that Rollins received a total of \$2,125 in benefits to which she was not entitled.

Rollins was found guilty and was sentenced to 180 days in jail, which was suspended for 180 days, and given two years of probation pending behavior of the defendant. She was also ordered to pay court costs and restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally.

- Tywanda Wright, of Fort Deposit, was tried in Lowndes County District Court on December 3, 2013. An investigation by Labor's Benefit Payment Control Section determined that Wright received a total of \$3,733 in benefits to which she was not entitled.

Wright pled guilty and was required to pay court costs and restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally.

- Justin D. Sparks, of Childersburg, was tried in Talladega County District Court on December 4, 2013. An investigation by Labor's Benefit Payment Control Section determined that Sparks received a total of \$3,586 in benefits to which he was not entitled.

Sparks pled guilty and was ordered to pay restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally within six months. At the end of the six month period, Sparks will be sentenced based on how timely he paid his restitution.

- Ledarius T. Dowdell, of Opelika, was tried in Lee County District Court on December 5, 2013. An investigation by Labor's Benefit Payment Control Section determined that Dowdell received a total of \$11,711 in benefits to which he was not entitled.

Dowdell pled guilty and was sentenced to six months in jail, which was suspended for two years pending restitution, and given two years of unsupervised probation. He was also ordered to pay court costs and restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally.

- Christopher A. Langham, of Mobile, was tried in Mobile County District Court on November 25, 2013. An investigation by Labor's Benefit Payment Control Section determined that Langham received a total of \$1,853 in benefits to which he was not entitled.

Langham pled guilty and was sentenced to one year in jail, which was suspended for two years pending restitution, and given two years of unsupervised probation. He was also ordered to pay court costs, bond fees, and restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally.

- Clinton Chisholm, of Notasulga, was tried in Macon County District Court on November 13, 2013. An investigation by Labor's Benefit Payment Control Section determined that Chisholm received a total of \$1,515 in benefits to which he was not entitled.

Chisholm pled guilty and was sentenced to one year in jail, which was suspended. He was also fined \$100 and ordered to pay court costs and restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally.

- Jimmy Jemison, of Tuscaloosa, was tried in Tuscaloosa County District Court on October 30, 2013. An investigation by Labor's Benefit Payment Control Section determined that Jemison received a total of \$7,855 in benefits to which he was not entitled.

Jemison pled guilty and was sentenced to 90 days in jail, which was suspended for two years pending behavior of the defendant. He was also ordered to pay court costs and restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally.

- Raymond Bates, of Tuscaloosa, was tried in Tuscaloosa County District Court on November 7, 2013. An investigation by Labor's Benefit Payment Control Section determined that Bates received a total of \$9,214 in benefits to which he was not entitled.

Bates pled guilty and was sentenced to 90 days in jail, which was suspended for 90 days pending behavior of the defendant. He was also ordered to pay court costs and restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally.

- Gracie Holley, of Tuscaloosa, was tried in Tuscaloosa County District Court on October 30, 2013. An investigation by Labor's Benefit Payment Control Section determined that Holley received a total of \$1,464 in benefits to which she was not entitled.

Holley pled guilty and was sentenced to 90 days in jail, which was suspended for two years pending behavior of the defendant. She was also ordered to pay court costs and restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally.

“In these economic times, we want to make sure that all who are entitled to benefits receive them. But at the same time, we will not allow those who deliberately try to defraud the system to go unpunished,” said Surtees. “We are working with local District Attorney Offices to make sure that we can identify and prosecute those individuals who are committing these crimes. We would also like to remind employers that their timely reporting of new hires is one of the best tools we have to detect unemployment fraud.”

Suspected unemployment compensation fraud may be reported to the Alabama Department of Labor by calling 1-800-392-8019.

Employers may find more information regarding reporting new hires at <http://www.labor.alabama.gov/nh>.

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Members of the media seeking more information should contact Communications Director Tara Hutchison at (334) 242-8616.