



## DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

### News Release

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#### **FRAUD CRACKDOWN ON FLEEING FELONS**

Attorney General Earl I. Anzai announced today that:  
The Department of Human Services Investigations Office recently completed a comprehensive investigation of individuals suspected of fraudulently obtaining public assistance benefits in Hawaii. These individuals were ineligible because they were wanted in connection with felony offenses. As a result of that investigation, 225 current welfare recipients were identified as persons wanted in connection with felony offenses by various law enforcement agencies in twenty-seven states and the District of Columbia. Their public assistance cases have been shut down saving the State of Hawaii approximately \$900,000 per year.  
In June of this year, Chief Investigator Eric T. Weyenberg, Hawaii's representative to the National Association of State Welfare Fraud Directors, contacted the Federal Bureau of Investigation which provided important technical assistance in helping to identify individuals who are wanted for felony offenses and therefore ineligible for most forms of public assistance. Under existing law even fleeing felons can qualify for medical assistance.

With record information from the FBI and state law enforcement agencies, DHS Special Investigator Antonio Borboa was able to identify wanted felons who were ineligible for public assistance. Fleeing probation and parole violators and others wanted in connection with felony offenses are wanted for every conceivable type of offense including kidnapping, sexual assault, escape, bail jumping, felony assault, counterfeiting, felony driving under the influence offenses, theft offenses, drug offenses, weapons offenses, and military desertion. Some individuals have already been arrested on the outstanding warrants.

Thus far, the State of Hawaii is one of only five states that has accepted the offer of the FBI to provide technical assistance in identifying wanted persons who are ineligible for public assistance benefits. Based upon the success of the program in Hawaii and the savings in public assistance costs, more states will probably consider similar programs.

Under existing law, when a suspect is arrested for an offense committed in another state, whether or not the suspect will be returned to face charges depends upon the willingness of the state where the warrant was issued to pay the costs of extradition. Too frequently, financially strapped states decline to extradite because of the immediate costs involved.

In addition to possible extradition, individuals who knew that they were wanted for a felony offense and concealed that information when applying for public assistance can and will be prosecuted by the State of Hawaii for welfare fraud.

The Department of the Attorney General wishes to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts by Chief Investigator Weyenberg and Special Investigator Borboa. Their efforts have saved the state almost a million dollars and will make Hawaii a safer place to live.

Every year, tips from the public save the State of Hawaii millions of dollars in public assistance money. Anyone having information concerning possible welfare fraud crimes should call the Welfare Fraud Hotline at (808) 587-8444.

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