



DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

News Release

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TEXAS FUGITIVE JAILED FOR WELFARE FRAUD

HONOLULU-Attorney General Mark Bennett announced that on July 2, 2003, First Circuit Court Judge Michael D. Wilson sentenced Waikiki resident Robbie Sterio, 26, to 113 days in jail as a special condition of five years probation for one count of theft in the first degree. Mr. Sterio, who is also known as Gino Tennis, Bobbie Sterio, and Paul Gills, was also ordered to pay \$24,552 in restitution to the State of Hawaii for fraudulently obtaining welfare benefits between 1999 and 2002. Judge Wilson granted a request by co-defendant Crystal Lynn Tennis, 23, to defer her no contest plea to one count of theft in the first degree. As a condition of her deferral, Ms. Tennis was ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$24,552 to the State of Hawaii. If Ms. Tennis, the mother of two minor children, complies with the terms and conditions of the deferral order, after six years, the charge against her will be dismissed and she will not have a permanent criminal record.

Department of Human Services investigators discovered that Ms. Tennis fraudulently received public assistance benefits by concealing from the government that the father of her minor children was living in her home under the alias of Gino Tennis. Ms. Tennis also concealed from the government that she knew that Mr. Sterio was wanted for a felony offense allegedly committed in 1996 in Denton County, Texas where Mr. Sterio was known as Paul Gills. The lifestyle of the household aroused suspicion when investigators learned that Ms. Tennis purchased a 2000 Chevrolet Silverado in 2000, and Ms. Tennis and Mr. Sterio, using the name Gino Tennis, leased a 2003 Mercedes Benz C240 sedan just days before their indictment on December 10, 2002.

Under Hawaii law, a person wanted in connection with a felony offense is ineligible for most forms of public assistance. And, applicants for welfare benefits who conceal from the government that a household member is a felony fugitive can be prosecuted for welfare fraud.

Theft in the first degree is a class B felony punishable by up to ten years in prison and by a fine of up to \$25,000 or twice the pecuniary gain from the crime whichever is greater.

Anyone having information concerning possible welfare fraud should call the Welfare Fraud Hotline at 808 587-8444. Calls to the Hotline save the State of Hawaii millions of dollars every year.

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