



# SIGTARP

Office of the Special Inspector General  
For The Troubled Asset Relief Program

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November 19, 2021

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## **D.C. Woman Indicted for Scheme to Steal Government Benefit Funds**

**Defendant Allegedly Stole Beneficiaries' Money for Own Benefit**

WASHINGTON – A District of Columbia woman has been charged in a 35-count indictment with carrying out a scheme to steal more than \$400,000 in government benefit funds provided by the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA) for the care and benefit of government beneficiaries.

Rosemary Ogbenna, 45, was arrested yesterday, following her indictment in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. The indictment was unsealed yesterday. She was released following her initial court appearance and is to be arraigned on Nov. 30, 2021.

The indictment was announced today by U.S. Attorney Matthew M. Graves; Gail S. Ennis, Inspector General for the Social Security Administration (SSA); Kim Lampkins, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA) Office of Inspector General (OIG) for the Mid-Atlantic Field Office, and Christy Goldsmith Romero, Special Inspector General for the Troubled Asset Relief Program.

According to the indictment, Ogbenna perpetrated a scheme in which she obtained and used SSA and VA benefit funds – which were intended for the care of elderly, mentally ill, disabled, and veteran beneficiaries – for her own personal use and benefit. The indictment alleges that Ogbenna stole more than \$400,000 in government benefits funds intended for the benefit of others who had been tenants of her rooming house business.

The Social Security Administration administers benefit programs under federal law, including the Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (“OASDI”) program, which provides monthly benefit funds to qualified retired and disabled workers and their dependents and to survivors of insured workers. Eligibility and benefit amounts under this program are determined by a worker's contributions to Social Security. Under another program, qualifying individuals receive monthly benefit funds under the Supplemental Security Income for the Aged, Blind, and Disabled (“SSI”) and related programs.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs serves the needs of American veterans, including providing monthly government benefit funds through its Veterans Benefits Administration.

As alleged in the indictment, Ogbenna carried out a scheme from at least March 19, 2009 through on or about Feb. 23, 2020, in which she obtained and maintained control over SSA benefit funds for some tenants of her rooming house business by becoming the Representative Payee of their SSA benefit funds. Although a Representative Payee has a duty to use SSA benefits solely on behalf of the beneficiary, the indictment alleges that Ogbenna used a portion of those funds for her own personal use and benefit.

In addition, the indictment alleges that Ogbenna also gained control over tenants' monthly VA benefits and used a portion of those VA benefit funds for her personal use and benefit without authority. The indictment further alleged that Ogbenna made false statements to agents investigating the fraud scheme and obstructed the investigation by providing altered documents.

Ogbenna is charged with 35 counts overall, including 12 counts of mail fraud, 16 counts of wire fraud, one count of theft of government property, two counts of aggravated identity theft, one count of Representative Payee fraud, one count of making a false statement, one count of tampering with documents, and one count of first-degree theft. If convicted, Ogbenna faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison for each count of mail fraud, wire fraud or tampering with documents, ten years in prison for the counts of theft of government property or first-degree theft, two years in prison for each count of aggravated identity theft, to run consecutive to any sentence for wire fraud, and five years in prison for the count of Representative Payee fraud.

The indictment includes a notification of the United States' intent to seek the forfeiture of any proceeds Ogbenna received as a result of the fraud scheme and theft of government property. If convicted of any of the charges, a federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

An indictment is merely a formal charge that a defendant has committed a violation of criminal law and is not evidence of guilt. Every defendant is presumed innocent until, and unless, proven guilty.

This case is being investigated by the Social Security Administration (SSA) - Office of Inspector General (OIG), the U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA) - Office of Inspector General (OIG) and the Office of Special Inspector General for the Troubled Asset Relief Program. Assistant U.S. Attorney Diane Lucas of the Fraud Section of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia, is prosecuting the case, supported by Financial Analyst Bryan Snitselaar and Paralegal Specialists Chad Byron and Mariela Andrade.

### **About SIGTARP**

SIGTARP was created as an independent law enforcement agency to investigate fraud, waste, and abuse related to the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act (EESA). To date, SIGTARP investigations have resulted in the recovery of over \$11.3 billion, 401 criminal convictions and 313 defendants sentenced to prison.

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