



# News Release

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## **Missouri Man Sentenced in Federal Court for Theft *Social Security Representative Payee Misused over \$144,000***

The Inspector General of Social Security, Gail S. Ennis, announced the sentencing of Robert Fountaine for false statements and theft of government funds. Fountaine was sentenced yesterday in U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Missouri, to five years of probation, and was ordered to pay \$144,465.30 in restitution to the Social Security Administration (SSA). Fountaine, indicted in September 2019, pleaded guilty to these charges in January 2020.

According to the indictment, Fountaine served as a representative payee for a Social Security beneficiary who died in 1999. Fountaine concealed the beneficiary's death from SSA, falsely reporting that the beneficiary was still alive, and providing a false accounting of how he was using the benefits intended for the beneficiary. Instead he misused the benefits for 20 years, for a total of \$144,465.30.

In 2019, after several unsuccessful attempts to contact the beneficiary, the Norfolk, Nebraska SSA office suspended the benefits and referred the matter to the Office of the Inspector General (OIG). Our investigation found evidence the beneficiary was deceased, and that Mr. Fountaine had knowingly concealed this information and misused the benefits issued to him as the representative payee.

"Representative payees must be held to account when they abuse the public trust and misuse the funds entrusted to them," said Jason Albers, Acting Special Agent-in-Charge of the SSA OIG Kansas City Field Division. "We will continue to work with SSA to identify this type of fraud, and recover money for taxpayers."

Inspector General Ennis thanked the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Missouri, and Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Diane Klocke in particular, for their support of this investigation and their efforts to bring this individual to justice.

Members of the public are encouraged to report suspected Social Security fraud to the OIG at <https://oig.ssa.gov/>.