



Lee County woman pleads guilty to over \$48,000 in - Kingsport Times-News (TN) - April 6, 2014 - page 1

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Lee **County** woman pleads guilty to over \$48,000 in welfare **fraud**

JONESVILLE — A Southwest Virginia woman who fraudulently collected nearly \$50,000 in welfare money over a four-year period pleaded guilty to 10 felony counts this week in Lee **County** Circuit Court.

Patricia Ann Wade, 37, of Pennington, was convicted Monday of eight counts of making false claims on a welfare application and two counts of welfare **fraud** after she falsely claimed on state welfare applications that her two children lived with her.

The Lee **County** Commonwealth's Attorney Shawn Hines said Wade collected a total of \$48,300 over a period of time stretching from October 2009 until August 2013. Of that amount, \$14,813 was for **SNAP** assistance, while the remaining \$33,489 was paid as Medicaid reimbursements for prescriptions and other medical services.

'This is something we've always had to deal with, just not to this amount,' Hines said. 'The point we make in all of these cases is that this money comes from somewhere, and it comes from the taxpayers of Lee **County**.'

'These programs are also set up to help people that are in need, and it boils everyone's blood when someone commits welfare **fraud**, especially to the tune of over \$48,000 of taxpayers money going to a fraudulent purpose.'

As a result of her pleas, Wade faces a maximum possible sentence of 120 years in state prison. She will also likely be ordered to pay restitution for the money she fraudulently received.

Wade was indicted by a Lee **County** grand jury in February 2014 on 10 felony counts following an investigation by the Lee **County** Department of Social Services and the Lee **County** Commonwealth's Attorney's Office.

Charges were brought after a Lee **County** DSS welfare **fraud** investigator determined that Wade claimed her son and daughter lived with her at a Pennington Gap apartment and attended Lee **County** schools when the children in fact lived with their father in Sullivan **County**.

The investigator reportedly found that Wade made the false claims on at least seven applications for services she submitted to the DSS office.

Based on the information she provided, Wade received an average of \$320 a week in assistance she wasn't entitled to over the nearly four-year period.

Investigators reportedly found a court order from Sullivan **County** giving custody of Wade's children to her ex-husband. The children were also enrolled in Sullivan **County** schools during the timeframe Wade claimed they lived with her.

Prosecutors said Wade was eligible for some welfare assistance herself, but not as much as she received claiming the children as dependents.

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