



Butte County

LAND OF NATURAL WEALTH AND BEAUTY

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PRESS RELEASE

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WOMAN COMMITS FRAUD ON TOP OF FRAUD WHILE IN JAIL

A 39-year-old Paradise woman was sentenced yesterday to 180 days in county jail for once again defrauding the welfare system while she was serving time in jail for a previous welfare fraud.

Lotheda Blanton was first convicted on November 29, 2005 for defrauding the welfare department out of \$4,241 in aid by failing to report wages from her employment at a local fast food establishment and as an In Home Support Services (IHSS) worker for her mother. She also failed to report that a child for whom she was drawing aid was out of the home. She was given probation upon that conviction and ordered to repay the money defrauded, perform 200 hours of community service and serve 42 days in Butte County Jail as a condition of that probation.

After this November conviction, Blanton continued to report to the IHSS authorities that she was still taking care of her mother. However a subsequent check by the District Attorney's IHSS Fraud Prevention Unit revealed Blanton was in the Butte County Jail serving her welfare fraud sentence during the same time she was drawing an IHSS check for allegedly taking care of her mother. Blanton was again arrested and charged with fraudulently taking \$646 from the IHSS system.

The Butte County District Attorney's Office argued Blanton should be sent to state prison since she had committed her new fraud while on probation and in jail on her old fraud. The District Attorney also pointed out to the sentencing judge that Blanton was also in violation of her first probation not only by virtue of her new crime but by her failure to make any payments on her first restitution and her failure to complete any of her ordered community service hours. Superior Court Judge Stephen E. Benson however agreed with a probation department recommendation that Blanton be given "another chance" before being sent to prison because she expressed a willingness to repay the past due restitution and to again attempt rehabilitation for a marijuana and methamphetamine problem she said drove her fraud. The judge ordered a new three year probation with new orders for restitution, additional community service time and the additional 180 days in county jail.