



NEWS RELEASE

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BAY AREA WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO TAX FRAUD FOR FILING TAX RETURNS THAT CLAIMED NON-EXISTENT DEPENDENTS

Former L.A. Resident Claimed She Bore 20 Different Children – All on Same Day

LOS ANGELES – A former Los Angeles resident who now resides in Livermore, California pleaded guilty late today to federal charges related to a scheme in which she filed fraudulent federal tax returns that claimed deductions for 20 non-existent children.

Norma Coronel, 40, pleaded guilty this afternoon in United States District Court to three felony counts – aiding and assisting in the preparation of fraudulent federal income tax returns, fraudulently using Social Security numbers obtained with false information, and theft of government property.

Coronel pleaded guilty before United States District Judge Manuel Real, who scheduled a sentencing hearing for November 28. As a result of today's guilty pleas, Coronel faces a statutory maximum sentence of 18 years in federal prison.

In a plea agreement filed in this case, Coronel admitted that in 2003 she applied for and obtained Social Security numbers for at least 20 fictitious children that she falsely claimed had been born to her at a Los Angeles hospital on December 11, 2002. Using these bogus identities, Coronel prepared and filed fraudulent federal tax returns for family members and friends that claimed dependent deductions and sought unwarranted refunds.

Coronel admitted in the plea agreement that she had frequently directed the Internal Revenue Service to send the unwarranted refunds to her own residence or to

accounts that she controlled. Coronel either failed to provide the taxpayers with copies of the returns that she had filed, or gave them copies of fake returns that had never been filed. As a result, the taxpayers were not aware that Coronel had filed fraudulent returns in their names or that Coronel was using the returns to obtain the refunds for her own benefit.

Coronel admitted in the plea agreement that as a result of her filing the false returns the government suffered losses totaling \$309,164.

In addition to the potential 18-year prison term, at sentencing Coronel faces a maximum fine of \$750,000. Coronel has also agreed to make full restitution to the United States.

The investigation and prosecution of Coronel was conducted by IRS - Criminal Investigation; The Treasury Department's Office of Inspector General for Tax Administration, and the Social Security Administration, Office of Inspector General.

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