



Mother and son conspire to commit fraud forging dead woman's signature to collect more than \$165,000 in benefits

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Co-conspirator worked as background singer for pop sensation Justin Bieber

LOS ANGELES, Calif. - Vernon Burris, 30, pleaded guilty to fraud and forgery in a scheme to collect more than \$165,000 in workers' compensation checks sent to his deceased aunt and deposit them into his mother's bank account. Burris' mother, Dolly Burris Bennett, 61, was arrested at his sentencing and charged with 20 counts of forgery and one count of grand theft. Burris Bennett was booked into Century Regional Detention Facility in Lynwood with bail set at \$465,000.

"The theft of benefit checks and forgery is another way the workers' compensation system is attacked and is a huge problem that affects all Californians by increasing insurance premiums for businesses and ultimately prices consumers pay for goods and services," said Commissioner Jones. "In this case we stopped two individuals who went to great lengths to steal more than \$165,000 dollars from Los Angeles County, which insures itself for workers' compensation claims. We are aggressively pursuing criminals that commit fraud to rip-off the workers' compensation system."

Burris Bennett was Deborah Wilkes' sister-in-law and care taker while Wilkes' received a lifetime pension award. A tip led to an investigation that revealed Wilkes died in December 2004 and Burris Bennett continued to receive and deposit Wilkes' benefit checks. Investigators found that Burris Bennett would give the checks to her son Vernon Burris who then forged Wilkes' signature and deposited into Burris Bennett's bank account.

A Department of Insurance investigation led to Vernon Burris' arrest on March 27, 2014. After pleading guilty, Burris received 100 hours of community service and was ordered to pay restitution of \$7,580 to Los Angeles County. To date Burris Bennett is still in custody awaiting trial.

This case is being prosecuted by the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office.

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Media Notes:

[Dolly Burris Bennett booking photo](#)

[Vernon Burris booking photo](#)

[Vernon Burris as background vocalist for Justin Bieber](#)

[Vernon Burris Social Media](#)

[Los Angeles County self-insures for workers' compensation claims](#)

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