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ROCKFORD WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO MAKING A FALSE STATEMENT TO OBTAIN A VETERAN'S ADMINISTRATION PENSION

ROCKFORD -- PATRICK J. FITZGERALD, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, and JOHN W. BROOKS, Special Agent-In-Charge of the Central Field Office of the U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs ("VA"), Office of Inspector General, today made the following announcement:

JEANNINE E. SNIDER, 66, of Rockford, Illinois, pled guilty today in federal court in Rockford to making a materially false statement on a VA pension form.

The VA provides pension benefits to certain eligible veterans of the armed forces of the United States and their surviving spouses. VA pensions are need based and are designed to increase the veteran's, or the veteran's surviving spouse's, total income to a level established by Congress.

In the plea agreement filed today, Snider admitted that she applied for a VA pension after the death of a former Rockford resident who had served in the United States Army. The veteran died on May 16, 2000. In the plea agreement, Snider admitted that on a VA pension application form, she falsely stated that she had married the veteran on October 1, 1986, in Tijuana, Mexico. As Snider acknowledged in the plea agreement, she was never legally married to the veteran.

Snider also admitted that she made false statements to the VA about her income and employment status. The false statements Snider admitted include: (1) a January 28, 2001, VA form on which Snider stated she was not currently working and that she had not worked during 2001, when in fact she was employed by a women's shelter in Rockford during January of 2001; (2) a January 25, 2004, VA form on which Snider stated that she earned no wages from employment during 2003, when in fact Snider was employed by a home health agency in 2003; and (3) a January 4, 2007, VA form on which Snider stated that she earned no wages from employment during 2006, when in fact Snider was employed by two home health agencies during 2006. Snider further admitted that from September 1, 2000, through March 31, 2007, she received a total of \$43,143 in VA pension benefits.

The charge to which Snider pled guilty carries a maximum potential sentence of up to 5 years in prison without parole, a term of supervised release following imprisonment of up to three years, and a fine of up to \$250,000, as well as any restitution ordered by the court. The actual sentence will be determined by the United States District Court, guided by the United States Sentencing Guidelines. United States District Judge Frederick J. Kapala has set Snider's sentencing hearing for July 7, 2011, at 2:30 p.m.

The case was investigated by the Central Field Office of the U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs, Office of Inspector General. The case is being prosecuted in federal court by Assistant United States Attorney SCOTT A. VERSEMAN.