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'Paraplegic' Ditches Wheelchair, Flees Cops

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. (May 12) - Authorities said a woman who claimed she was a paraplegic and repeatedly filed claims and lawsuits for noncompliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act was a con artist without any physical limitations.



Las Vegas Police Department

Laura Lee Medley is charged with filing false documents, attempted grand theft and two counts of insurance fraud.

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After her arrest this month by Las Vegas police, Laura Lee Medley, 35, leaped from her wheelchair and ran for freedom, officials said.

Complaining earlier that she was having medical problems, police took the woman to a Las Vegas hospital for treatment, said David Wert, spokesman for San Bernardino County.

"That's where the great miracle occurred," he said. Medley "made a break for it," leading police on a brief foot pursuit before she was captured, Wert said.

Medley's claims against public entities - including San Bernardino County, South Pasadena and Long Beach - claimed a bus dropped her off near what she called a non-ADA compliant roadway or curb, causing her wheelchair to topple. She claimed three broken arms in eight weeks - two lefts and a right.

South Pasadena settled Medley's claim for \$6,700 on Oct. 18, 2005.

Her questionable claims led to last week's arrest in Las Vegas.

Medley was charged with filing false documents, attempted grand theft and two counts of insurance fraud. She is in a Las Vegas jail awaiting extradition to San Bernardino.

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Medley's alleged deception was discovered by San Bernardino County officials after she filed a complaint saying she fell and broke her left arm on Oct. 17, 2005.

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County lawyer Mike Sachs said Medley called him in D to complain about treatment she was receiving from county employees. Medley claimed she was an ADA compliant and she threatened to organize a protest march, Sachs

"She was a very pushy lady, and anytime she wasn't happy with a response she was getting from someone at the hospital she would try to go to the next highest person," Sachs

On Feb. 4, she filed a claim for \$9,072 in medical expenses and lost wages. Medley then produced hospital medical records, documents that repeatedly misspelled Bernardino.

The hospital confirmed the documents were bogus.

Sachs said they learned Medley filed a nearly identical wheelchair-toppling claim seeking \$1 million from Long Beach. The claim was denied because the sidewalk was wheelchair accessible, Beach Deputy City Attorney Belinda Mayes said.

Medley then filed a federal lawsuit April 4 against Long Beach. That U.S. District Court suit is pending and Mayes declined comment.

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