

PRESS RELEASE

Canadian Man Sentenced Following Trial Convictions for Pandemic Fraud

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For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Northern District of New York

ALBANY, NEW YORK – Joseph Osei, a/k/a/ "Kyngjo," age 30, a Canadian citizen formerly of Albany, was sentenced on Tuesday to 54 months in prison for engaging in a fraudulent scheme to obtain COVID-19 pandemic-related unemployment insurance benefits using stolen identities.

Acting United States Attorney John A. Sarcone III; Ketty Larco-Ward, Inspector in Charge of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS), Boston Division; Erin Keegan, Special Agent in Charge of the Buffalo Field Office of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI); and Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent in Charge, Northeast Region, United States Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General (USDOL-OIG), made the announcement.

The trial evidence showed that from August 2020 through November 2020, Osei fraudulently obtained unemployment insurance benefits from the New York State Department of Labor worth more than \$200,000. Additional evidence also included Osei's schemes to defraud the state workforce agencies of California, Rhode Island, and Arizona using stolen identities to apply for and obtain pandemic unemployment insurance benefits. In May, jurors deliberated for less than two hours before returning a guilty verdict on all counts, including four counts of mail fraud, one count of access device fraud, and two counts of aggravated identity theft.

United States District Judge Mae A. D'Agostino also ordered a 3-year term of supervised release to follow Osei's release from prison, as well as restitution to the State of New York and State of Arizona in the total amount of \$211,360, and forfeiture of a money judgment.

Acting U.S. Attorney John A. Sarcone III stated: "Joseph Osei's brazen exploitation of critical relief programs during a national crisis was an affront to every individual who genuinely relied on these resources to survive. By stealing the identities of other people,

Osei not only violated the law but also undermined the very purpose of programs designed to help those in need. His actions were callous and calculated, and justice was served when he was found guilty on all counts and then sentenced yesterday to 54 months in prison. I thank each law enforcement agency involved in this task force for their hard work in prosecuting this case."

USPIS Inspector in Charge Ketty Larco-Ward stated: "The relief programs that Osei stole from were created as lifelines during the COVID pandemic and Osei took funds away from those in need and victimized unsuspecting people by stealing their personal identifying information. The U.S. Postal Inspection Service will relentlessly pursue those who misuse the mail for fraud and bring them to justice."

HSI Special Agent in Charge Erin Keegan said: "HSI Albany is proud to have played a role in ensuring Joseph Osei faced the consequences of his fraud and identity theft. The prosecution of Osei will serve as a deterrent to anyone else who thinks about trying to steal from New Yorkers and government programs."

Jonathan R. Mellone, Special Agent-in-Charge, Northeast Region, USDOL-OIG stated, "Joseph Osei used stolen identities to fraudulently obtain critical taxpayer funds intended for American workers in need of unemployment insurance benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic. Safeguarding the integrity of the unemployment insurance program remains a top priority for the Office of Inspector General. We will continue to work closely with the U.S. Attorney's Office and our law enforcement partners to ensure the protection of U.S. Department of Labor programs and operations."

This case was investigated by USDOL-OIG, USPIS, and HSI, with assistance from U.S. Customs and Border Protection's New York Field Office and the New York State Department of Labor's Office of Special Investigations. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Alexander P. Wentworth-Ping and Joshua R. Rosenthal prosecuted the case.

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