

PRESS RELEASE

FORMER EMPLOYEE OF THE LOUISIANA WORKFORCE COMMISSION PLEADS GUILTY TO WIRE FRAUD

Wednesday, June 25, 2025

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Middle District of Louisiana

Acting United States Attorney Ellison C. Travis announced that Paris Lashay Haynes, age 28, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, pled guilty before U.S. District Judge John W. deGravelles to wire fraud.

According to admissions made as part of her guilty plea, from approximately April 2020 to March 2021, Haynes was employed with the Louisiana Workforce Commission ("LWC") as a customer service representative. In this position, she was responsible for assisting individuals with their unemployment insurance claims.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security ("CARES") Act was a federal law enacted in March of 2020 to provide emergency financial assistance to individuals suffering the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Among other provisions, the CARES Act expanded unemployment insurance eligibility and benefits for workers who lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic ("Pandemic Unemployment Assistance" or "PUA").

The LWC located in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, administered the PUA program for the State of Louisiana. The LWC maintained a self-service system for PUA applications, identified as "HiRE." For claims filed or accessed via the internet, the LWC's website captured certain data surrounding the interaction between the individual and the HiRE system. This information tied to the user-entered information for the claim, such as name, address, or bank account information.

As an employee of the LWC, Haynes was assigned credentials that allowed her to access LWC's HiRE system, including individual claimant accounts. Beginning on or about April 2020, and continuing through at least March 2021, she devised a scheme to defraud by entering false and fraudulent information in the HiRE system, via interstate wires, in

order to obtain PUA benefits to which she was not entitled. Haynes used her credentials to access the HiRE system from her residence in Texas and elsewhere. Thereafter, she made changes, without lawful authority, to the accounts of inactive PUA claimants. Specifically, Haynes changed usernames, passwords, and email addresses associated with the accounts. She then logged into claimant accounts and changed the claimants' preferred method of payment, including their bank routing information, in order to re-direct PUA benefits to her own bank accounts or to accounts under her control. After changing their bank information, Haynes filed false and fraudulent weekly certifications in the names of UI claimants, causing LWC to transmit UI funds in the names of other individuals to her.

Beginning in or around March 2021, and continuing through at least June 2022, Haynes also electronically submitted PUA applications to the LWC in her own name in which she falsely certified that she was unemployed due to the COVID-19 pandemic when, as she well knew, her prior employment had been terminated due to her own misconduct.

During the course of the scheme, Haynes accessed and made changes to approximately forty (40) claimant accounts in order to redirect PUA program benefits to her own bank accounts or to accounts under her control. In total, Haynes obtained at least \$200,000 in PUA benefits to which she was not entitled.

This matter is being investigated by the Department of Labor, Office of the Inspector General, and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Kristen Lundin Craig.

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