



U.S. Department of Justice

United States Attorney
Northern District of Illinois

Zachary T. Fardon
United States Attorney

Everett McKinley Dirksen United States Courthouse
219 South Dearborn Street, 5th Floor
Chicago, Illinois 60604
(312) 353-5300

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FORMER TAX PREPARER SENTENCED TO FOUR YEARS IN FEDERAL PRISON FOR OBTAINING MORE THAN \$315,000 IN FRAUDULENT UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

CHICAGO — A federal judge sentenced a former tax preparer to four years in prison for fraudulently obtaining more than \$315,000 in unemployment benefits.

LETICIA WILLIAMS-ENGLISH, 52, of Maywood, pleaded guilty in April to one count of wire fraud. Williams-English admitted that she filed more than 60 fraudulent claims for unemployment insurance, using the identities of various individuals who knew nothing about the scheme and did not know Williams-English. She obtained many of the individuals' identifying information through her employment at a tax preparation service.

The scheme netted Williams-English approximately \$315,393 in unemployment benefits to which she was not entitled.

U.S. District Judge Samuel Der-Yeghiayan imposed the sentence on Sept. 14, 2016, in federal court in Chicago. Judge Der-Yeghiayan also ordered Williams-English to pay restitution in the amount of \$315,393.

"When a defendant engages in a scheme to defraud a government benefits program, it delegitimizes that program, the beneficiaries and the authentic need for the benefits provided by the program," Assistant U.S. Attorney Sheri H. Mecklenburg argued in the government's sentencing memorandum. "Such a crime steals funds from a worthy program, but it also chips away at the integrity of a program meant to help people who need it."

The case was investigated by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of the Inspector General and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

The sentencing was announced by Zachary T. Fardon, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois; James Vanderberg, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Region of the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Inspector General, Office of Labor Racketeering and Fraud Investigations; and E.C. Woodson, Inspector-in-Charge of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service in Chicago.

The government is represented by Ms. Mecklenburg.

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