

Press Release

Fraudster Who Submitted Over \$340,000 in Fake COVID Unemployment Benefits Applications Pleads Guilty

Wednesday, September 10, 2025

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of North Carolina

WILMINGTON, N.C. – A Pitt County woman who submitted false pandemic unemployment benefit applications pleaded guilty to theft of government property charges on Wednesday. Shontavia Riddick, 32, faces a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison when a federal judge sentences her later this year.

According to court documents and other information presented in court, Riddick defrauded the North Carolina Department of Commerce, Division of Employment Security (NCDES) by submitting more than 65 fraudulent unemployment benefits claims, requesting more than \$340,000 in unemployment benefits. Riddick made false representations on the applications about the applicant's employment and submitted fraudulent documents to support the applications.

"When people lie, cheat, and steal taxpayers' money that should be used to support actual struggling citizens, it undermines the whole system," said U.S. Attorney Ellis Boyle. "We cannot allow individuals to loot the cellar to get fat while starving people go without. Not in Eastern North Carolina."

Ellis Boyle, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of North Carolina made the announcement after Chief U.S. District Judge Richard E. Myers II accepted the plea. United States Department of Labor Office of the Inspector General is investigating the case and Assistant U.S. Attorney Ethan Ontjes is prosecuting the case.

Related court documents and information can be found on the website of the [U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina](#) or on [PACER](#) by searching for Case No. 4:25-CR-19-M.

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