

**Department of Justice**

U.S. Attorney's Office

Western District of Virginia

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, August 24, 2022

## **Pound, Va. Man Convicted as Part of Massive Scheme to Steal Pandemic Unemployment Benefits**

ABINGDON, Va. – A federal jury convicted a Pound, Virginia man on August 11, 2022 for conspiring to steal pandemic unemployment benefits as part of a larger scheme involving at least 37 other co-conspirators.

Danny L. Mullins Jr., 50, was convicted following a two-day jury trial of conspiracy to defraud the United States, fraud in connection with federal emergency benefits, conspiracy to commit mail fraud, mail fraud, and aggravated identity theft.

According to court documents and evidence presented at trial, Mullins received more than \$18,000 in fraudulent benefits by conspiring with others, including his sister, Veronica Mullins, and conspiracy leaders Danielle Chytka, Greg Tackett, and Jeffrey Tackett, to input his personally identifiable information to the Virginia Employment Commission in order to receive pandemic unemployment benefits to which he was not entitled.

In all, the conspiracy involved submitting fraudulent claims for approximately 37 individuals, including multiple inmates incarcerated in southwest Virginia regional jails, all of whom were not eligible to receive pandemic unemployment benefits, and causing at least \$499,000 in false claims to be paid.

Mullins will be sentenced on November 7, 2022 and faces a maximum penalty of 30 years in prison and a fine of up to \$1,000,000.

United States Attorney Christopher R. Kavanaugh of the Western District of Virginia, Syreeta Scott, Special Agent-in-Charge, Philadelphia Region, U.S. Department of Labor - Office of Inspector General, and Special Agent in Charge Darrell J. Waldon of the Internal Revenue Service- Criminal Investigation, Washington, D.C. Field Office made the announcement.

The Department of Labor - Office of the Inspector General, the Internal Revenue Service – Criminal Investigation - Washington, D.C. Field Office, the Norton Police Department investigated the case. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Assistant United States Attorneys Daniel J. Murphy and Lena Busscher prosecuted the case.

On May 17, 2021, the Attorney General established the COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Task Force to marshal the resources of the Department of Justice in partnership with agencies across government to enhance efforts to combat and prevent pandemic-related fraud. The Task Force bolsters efforts to investigate and prosecute the most culpable domestic and international criminal actors and assists agencies tasked with administering relief programs to prevent fraud by, among other methods, augmenting and incorporating existing coordination mechanisms, identifying resources and techniques to uncover fraudulent actors and their schemes, and sharing and harnessing information

and insights gained from prior enforcement efforts. For more information on the Department's response to the pandemic, please visit <https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus>.

Anyone with information about attempted fraud involving COVID-19 can report it by calling the Department of Justice's National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) Hotline at 866-720-5721 or via the NCDF Web Complaint Form at: <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form>.

**Component(s):**

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