

**PRESS RELEASE**

# **South Carolina woman sentenced to prison for multi-state unemployment insurance fraud**

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

**For Immediate Release**

U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District of Georgia

## **Family members also implicated in COVID-era scheme**

**AUGUSTA, Georgia:** A South Carolina woman was sentenced to prison and ordered to pay substantial restitution for her role in a multi-state scheme to fraudulently obtain unemployment insurance benefits.

**Ricki Johnson**, 42, of Trenton, South Carolina, was sentenced to 54 months in prison after pleading guilty to Mail Fraud, said Margaret E. "Meg" Heap, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Georgia. U.S. District Court Judge Dudley H. Bowen also ordered Johnson to pay restitution and criminal forfeiture of \$104,632 and to serve three years of supervised release upon completion of her prison term.

There is no parole in the federal system.

"Relaxed rules during the pandemic era made it easier for individuals to access many government-provided services, but unfortunately it opened the floodgates for scammers who took advantage of the system to enrich themselves," said U.S. Attorney Heap. "This case, and many others like it, demonstrate that federal investigators and prosecutors will identify these criminals and hold them accountable."

In March 2020, Congress authorized additional funding and expanded eligibility for state-administered unemployment insurance programs as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. In an effort to maintain the integrity of those benefits, the Office of Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Labor (OIG-DOL) investigates individuals attempting to fraudulently access unemployment insurance funds.

As described in court documents and testimony, over a two-year period Johnson electronically submitted false unemployment insurance benefit applications to approximately 18 states. Seven of those states (Georgia, South Carolina, West Virginia, Rhode Island, Mississippi, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania) paid out approximately \$104,632 in benefits to her. Some of the benefits were in the form of a debit card sent to Johnson through the U.S. Mail.

Johnson and her mother, **Cheryl Galloway**, 66, of Yulee, Florida, subsequently were named in a seven-count indictment in the Southern District of Georgia in May 2025, alleging their participation in a scheme to fraudulently obtain unemployment benefits in multiple states.

Galloway, who is charged with one count of Conspiracy to Commit Mail Fraud and three counts of Mail Fraud, awaits further court proceedings. She is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty. Her son and Johnson's brother, identified in court as the late Nick Morrison, was listed as an unnamed co-conspirator in the indictment.

"Ricki Johnson and her co-conspirators stole from American taxpayers – filing fraudulent unemployment claims across multiple states and abusing programs meant to help workers in need," said Anthony D'Esposito, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General. "At the Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, we are relentless in pursuing fraud. Working alongside our law enforcement partners, we will continue protecting the integrity of the unemployment insurance system and ensuring criminals who exploit it are held accountable."

Anyone with information about attempted unemployment insurance benefits fraud can contact OIG-DOL at [www.oig.dol.gov/hotline.htm](http://www.oig.dol.gov/hotline.htm).

The case was investigated by the Office of Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Labor and prosecuted for the United States by Assistant U.S. Attorney George J.C. Jacobs III.

### **Contact**

For any questions, please contact the U.S. Attorney's Office at (912) 652-4422.

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