

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Eastern District of Michigan

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Southfield Man Sentenced to Prison for Stealing Identities and \$400,000 in Pandemic Aid Money

DETROIT - A Southfield man was sentenced today to 5 years in federal prison on charges of wire fraud and identity theft in connection with a scheme to defraud and obtain more than \$400,000 in unemployment insurance benefits from the states of Michigan and Pennsylvania, announced United States Attorney Dawn N. Ison.

Joining in the announcement were James A. Tarasca, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Detroit Field Office, and Irene Lindow, Special Agent-in-Charge, Chicago Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General

Samuel Baker, 39, of Southfield, was sentenced by United States District Judge Paul D. Borman in United States District Court in Detroit this afternoon.

According to the court documents, beginning on or about May 8, 2020, and continuing through at least July 28, 2020, Baker submitted fraudulent applications for \$370,000 in unemployment insurance benefits in Michigan and Pennsylvania. Baker also successfully obtained a fraudulent \$47,000 Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) from the Small Business Administration. Baker submitted the unemployment claims by stealing the identities of numerous individuals, including using their Social Security Numbers. Baker directed the benefits to be paid out via debit cards and then used these cards to repeatedly withdrawal the funds via ATMs throughout Metro Detroit. At the time of his arrest, federal agents seized \$187,000 in cash from Baker, as well as four Rolex watches and ten gold coins.

"We remain committed to working with our law enforcement partners to investigate and prosecute thefts from a multitude of federal assistance programs. Individuals who stole money from the government during the pandemic should know that they will be held accountable. We are actively working a number of these cases and we will continue to bring the perpetrators of these crimes to justice," stated U.S Attorney Ison.

"Samuel Baker defrauded multiple state workforce agencies by filing for unemployment insurance benefits in the names of identity theft victims, which resulted in a loss of more than \$365,000. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners and state workforce agencies to protect the integrity of unemployment insurance benefit programs," said Irene Lindow, Special Agent-in-Charge, Chicago Region, U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General.

Baker was also ordered to pay restitution to the victim-states and the Small Business Administration in the total amount of \$414,454. Likewise, he forfeited his interest in the \$187,000 in cash that was seized, as well as the Rolexes and gold coins.

The investigation of this case was conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, with the assistance of the Bloomfield Township Police Department. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Ryan A. Particka.

Topic(s):

Coronavirus

Component(s):

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