

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Northern District of New York

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, February 23, 2022

Three Men Indicted in Capital Region Unemployment Insurance Fraud Conspiracy

ALBANY, NEW YORK – Kahleke Taylor, age 21, of Albany; Taquan Parker, age 25, of Snellville, Georgia, and formerly of Albany; and Olajuwon Sutherland, age 26, of Troy, New York, were indicted earlier this month for engaging in a fraudulent scheme to obtain more than \$100,000 in unemployment insurance benefits. The alleged false claims exploited federal programs intended to aid out-of-work New Yorkers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The announcement was made by United States Attorney Carla B. Freedman; Matthew Scarpino, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the Buffalo Field Office of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI); New York State Inspector General Lucy Lang; Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent in Charge, New York Region, United States Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General (USDOL-OIG); and Ketty Larco-Ward, Inspector in Charge of the Boston Division of the United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS).

The indictment alleges that Parker and Sutherland provided Taylor with the personal identifying information of other people, which Taylor used to file false claims via the New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) website. NYSDOL ultimately paid more than \$100,000 in benefits. The charges in the indictment are merely accusations. The defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

Taylor appeared last week before United States Magistrate Judge Daniel J. Stewart and was ordered detained after he waived a detention hearing. Parker appeared last week in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Georgia, was released with conditions, and is scheduled to first appear before Judge Stewart on March 10. Sutherland appeared today before Judge Stewart, who ordered Sutherland detained pending a detention hearing scheduled for tomorrow.

The defendants are charged with mail and wire fraud, as well as aggravated identity theft. The mail and wire fraud charges carry a maximum term of 20 years in prison, a fine of up to \$250,000, and a term of supervised release of up to 3 years. The charges for aggravated identity theft carry a mandatory term of 2 years in prison, to be imposed consecutive to any other term of imprisonment. A defendant's sentence is imposed by a judge based on the particular statute the defendant is charged with violating, the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other factors.

This case is being investigated by HSI, the New York State Inspector General's Office, USDOL-OIG, and USPIS, with assistance from the NYSDOL Office of Special Investigations and the Schenectady County Department of Social Services, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney John T. Chisholm.

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 allegations of 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>.

Topic(s):

Coronavirus

Financial Fraud

Component(s):

[USAO - New York, Northern](#)

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