

PRESS RELEASE

California Man Admits to Aiding and Abetting a Wire Fraud Scheme During COVID-19 that Cost the Federal Government Over \$100,000

Thursday, February 29, 2024

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Utah

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah – A California resident pleaded guilty today to aiding and abetting wire fraud, which led to defrauding the federal government of approximately \$114,066 in unemployment benefits during COVID-19, while he was living and working in Utah. He also admitted to aiding and abetting others to fraudulently apply and pay him as compensation.

According to court documents and admissions made during his change of plea hearing, Robert James Waff, 50, of Sacramento, CA, from June 2020 to September 2020, devised a scheme to defraud the California Employment Development Department by applying for the Covid-19 related California unemployment benefits through the California EDD website. Waff admitted that he applied, and aided and abetted others to apply, for unemployment benefits that were funded by the CARES Act in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Waff applied for the benefits electronically, and submitted a false address, false employment history and false income. Waff then began collecting the unemployment benefits while living and working in Utah. Waff then assisted three others, who never worked in California, to apply electronically for the same benefits by supplying them with the same false information. He then had debit cards mailed to his address in Utah. In return for his assistance, the three individuals paid Waff a cash portion of their unemployment benefits. See former release [here](#).

Waff is scheduled to be sentenced May 15, 2024, at 2:00 p.m. in courtroom 3.4 before a U.S. District Court Judge at the Orrin G. Hatch United States District Courthouse in downtown Salt Lake City.

U.S. Attorney, Trina A. Higgins, of the District of Utah made the announcement.

The case is being investigated jointly by the FBI Salt Lake City Division and the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General (OIG).

Assistant United States Attorney Brian Williams of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Utah is prosecuting the case.

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>.

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