

PRESS RELEASE

California Man Sentenced to Prison for Fraud

Wednesday, May 21, 2025

For Immediate Release

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

PHOENIX, Ariz. – Ronnie Lamar Strawberry, Jr., 39, of Los Angeles, California was sentenced on May 19, 2025, by Senior United States District Judge G. Murray Snow to 33 months in prison and ordered to pay \$528,426 in restitution. Strawberry pleaded guilty to Conspiracy to Commit Wire Fraud. His sister, Raychelle Strawberry, who pleaded guilty to the same charge, was sentenced on the same day to 60 months of probation for her role in the offense.

According to the court documents and statements made in court, Ronnie Strawberry conspired with his sister and others to file false and fraudulent unemployment insurance claims under the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program. Strawberry filed fraudulent claims in both California and Arizona using stolen identities. The scheme was sophisticated and used personal identifiable information — such as name, date of birth, and social security number — from more than 25 individuals to file online unemployment applications in Arizona and California.

“The defendant exploited a national crisis for personal gain,” said U.S. Attorney Timothy Courchaine. “He stole nearly \$500,000 in pandemic relief funds that were meant to support struggling families and small businesses. This office will continue to investigate and prosecute those who stole from state and federal governments during the pandemic and intentionally depleted the public fisc for personal profit.”

“An important part of the mission of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General is to investigate allegations of fraud involving unemployment insurance (UI) programs. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to protect the integrity of the nation’s Unemployment Insurance system,” said Quentin Heiden, Special Agent-in-Charge, Western Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General.

U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General (OIG), Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) OIG, and Homeland Security, OIG conducted the investigation in this case. Assistant U.S. Attorney, Kevin M. Rapp, District of Arizona handled the prosecution.

CASE NUMBER: CR-24-00390- PHX-GMS

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