

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Virginia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, March 30, 2022

Castlewood Man Sentenced to Prison for Defrauding Government in Pandemic Unemployment Scheme

ABINGDON, Va. – One of the 33 individuals charged with defrauding the federal government of more than \$499,000 in pandemic unemployment benefits was sentenced this week to 30 months in federal prison.

Timothy Hunter Hileman, 29, of Castlewood, Virginia, pleaded guilty in November 2021 to one count of conspiracy to defraud the government, one count of conspiracy to commit mail fraud, and one count of making false statements to federal law enforcement officers.

According to court documents, over the course of nine months, Hileman conspired with Leelynn Danielle Chytka, Gregory Marcus Tackett, Jeffery Ryan Tackett, and others to file fraudulent claims with the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) on behalf of dozens of individuals who were not entitled to those benefits. Chytka, the mastermind behind the scheme, and Greg Tackett were both sentenced to nine years in prison, while Jeff Tackett received eight and a half years' imprisonment.

Conspiracy members lied on VEC forms as part of the scheme to make filers appear eligible for unemployment benefits. Because pandemic unemployment benefits were paid weekly, each of those filings to the VEC website re-verified and re-certified the false statements on numerous occasions throughout the scheme, with the total cost to the United States of over \$499,000.

United States Attorney Christopher R. Kavanaugh of the Western District of Virginia; Syreeta Scott, Special Agent in Charge, Philadelphia Regional Office, U.S. Department of Labor - Office of Inspector General; and Special Agent in Charge Darrell J. Waldon of the Internal Revenue Service – Criminal Investigation Washington, D.C., Field Office made the announcement.

The Department of Labor - Office of the Inspector General, the Internal Revenue Service – Criminal Investigation Washington, D.C., Field Office, the Norton Police Department, and the Russell County Sheriff's Office investigated the case.

Assistant United States Attorney Daniel J. Murphy prosecuted the case.

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 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

Component(s):
[USAO - Virginia, Western](#)