

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Eastern District of Texas

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Collin County Man Indicted for COVID Unemployment Fraud

PLANO, Texas – An Allen, Texas man has been indicted for federal crimes arising from a scheme to extract Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act using the stolen identity of others, announced U.S. Attorney Brit Featherston today.

Hilton Ray Kersh, 64, was charged in an indictment filed in the Eastern District of Texas with seven counts of illegal transactions with an access device and seven counts of aggravated identity theft. The indictment alleges that Kersh used multiple bank cards issued to individuals other than himself to withdraw funds from ATMs. The debit cards had been loaded with UI benefit funds based on unemployment relief applications made to the Texas Workforce Commission pursuant to the CARES Act. The individuals whose names appear on the debit cards -- and whose names were used to apply for the benefits -- did not authorize Kersh to use their identities. If convicted, Kersh faces up to 15 years in federal prison for the illegal transactions with an access device charges and two additional years for the aggravated identity theft charges.

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>.

This case is being investigated by the U. S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General. Assistant U.S. Attorney Brent L. Andrus is prosecuting the case.

A federal criminal indictment is merely an accusation. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

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Topic(s):

Coronavirus

Component(s):

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