

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Eastern District of Michigan

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Conspirators Sentenced to Nearly Five Years for Identity Theft and Unemployment Insurance Fraud Scheme

A Detroit man was sentenced today for conspiring to steal identities and unemployment benefits, United States Attorney Barbara L. McQuade announced today.

McQuade was joined in the announcement by James Vanderberg, Special Agent in Charge, Chicago Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, and Wanda Stokes, director, of the Michigan Talent Investment Agency which administers the Unemployment Insurance program

Joel Randall Driscoll, 27, was sentenced to 57 months for conspiracy to commit mail fraud and aggravated identity theft. The aggravated identity theft charge carries a mandatory two-year sentence, which is imposed consecutively to the sentence for other crimes.

According to the indictment, Driscoll, along with co-conspirators Lashea Catrice Scott, Grady Whitaker, Jr., Devonte Cook, Deonta Holley and Terence Gould, devised and executed a scheme to defraud and obtain public money from the State of Michigan Unemployment Insurance program from January 2012 to December 2015. Michigan unemployment benefits, which are funded by employers and the U.S. Department of Labor, are paid to individuals who are unemployed. As part of the conspiracy, the defendants stole the identities of unsuspecting individuals and applied for benefits in their names. The benefits were issued on debits cards, which the defendants used at automated teller machines across Detroit to access the unemployment insurance benefits for personal use. The conspiracy involved the stolen identities of hundreds of individuals and resulted in losses to the government of more than \$400,000.

"These criminals not only stole funds from the state, but they also stole money from the pockets of the unemployed workers for whom the benefits were intended by committing identify fraud." McQuade said.

"Joel Driscoll victimized individuals by stealing their identities, and defrauded the Michigan Unemployment Insurance program of more than \$400,000 intended for American workers in need of relief from the financial effects of unemployment. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to safeguard the Unemployment Insurance Program," stated James Vanderberg, Special Agent in Charge, Chicago Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General.

Co-conspirator Grady Whitaker, Jr. was sentenced to 68 months in custody on December 12, 2016 for his role in the conspiracy and the aggravated identity theft. The

remaining defendants have all entered pleas to various charges and are awaiting sentencing.

The case was investigated by U.S. Department of Labor – Office of Inspector General in conjunction with the State of Michigan – Unemployment Insurance Agency and prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Erin J. Hendrix and Brandy R. McMillion.