



**OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR**

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## **South Los Angeles Man Sentenced for EDD Fraud Scheme**

**LOS ANGELES** – A California man was sentenced today to 36 months in federal prison with 24 months of probation for his role in scheming with an inmate in the California state prison system to collect and use the personally identifiable information of other inmates and identity theft victims to fraudulently obtain more than \$235,000 in taxpayer-funded, COVID-19 pandemic-related, jobless benefits.

Prentiss Ray Westbrook, 35, of South Los Angeles, was sentenced by United States District Judge Michael W. Fitzgerald, who also ordered him to pay \$235,398 in restitution. Westbrook pleaded guilty in October 2025 to one count of mail fraud and one count of aggravated identity theft.

“Prentiss Ray Westbrook and his co-conspirators siphoned taxpayer dollars from a system designed to help Americans in crisis. Their scheme—built on stolen identities, inmate data, and the exploitation of a national emergency—undermined the integrity of the unemployment insurance program. Today’s sentence demonstrates our unwavering commitment, together with the Department of Justice’s National Fraud Enforcement Division, to pursuing those who abuse federal benefit programs,” said Anthony P. D’Esposito, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Labor. “Let this stand as a clear warning: If you defraud the unemployment insurance system, whether from the street or from inside a prison cell, we will uncover it and hold you accountable.”

According to his plea agreement, from July 2020 to January 2021, Westbrook and his co-conspirators schemed to fraudulently obtain money and property from the California Employment Development Department (EDD) and the United States Treasury, namely, unemployment insurance (UI) benefits, including Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) benefits. PUA was a federal UI program established by Congress in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic and was administered by EDD.

Co-defendant Dajuan Hassan, 36, of Los Angeles, who was incarcerated in a California state prison at the time, obtained personally identifiable information of inmates (e.g., names, dates of birth, and Social Security numbers) and passed that information to Westbrook using the prison phone system. Westbrook and co-conspirators then filed fraudulent UI claims with EDD on behalf of the inmates and in the names of identity theft victims.

In the fraudulent EDD applications, Westbrook falsely represented that the claimants had recently lost employment from California businesses or were unable to find employment in California because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

To receive the fraudulently obtained funds, Westbrook arranged for EDD-issued debit cards to be mailed to addresses under his control, including one in Gardena. Westbrook and co-conspirators later withdrew cash from ATMs throughout the region.

In August 2020, Westbrook knowingly possessed and used a victim's identity in relation to an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) debit card in the victim's name in connection with the scheme. In April 2021, law enforcement executed a search warrant at Westbrook's Gardena apartment and seized a DMV letter addressed to Westbrook, numerous EDD letters, and an EDD letter mailed to the victim.

Westbrook admitted in his plea agreement that his scheme caused a total loss of approximately \$235,398 and his unlawful conduct and fraudulent scheme involved more than 10 victims.

Hassan has pleaded not guilty to the charges against him. He is scheduled to go to trial on November 17. He is in federal custody.

The U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General; Employee Development Department Investigations Division; California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Special Service Unit; and Homeland Security Investigations investigated this matter with the assistance from the Customs and Border Patrol Special Response Team, Gardena Police Department, and the Los Angeles Police Department.

Assistant United States Attorney Lauren E. Border of the Transnational Organized Crime Section prosecuted this case.

On April 7, 2026, the Department of Justice announced the creation of the National Fraud Enforcement Division. The core mission of the Fraud Division is to zealously investigate and prosecute those who steal or fraudulently misuse taxpayer dollars. Department of Justice efforts to combat fraud support President Trump's Task Force to Eliminate Fraud, a whole-of-government effort chaired by Vice President J.D. Vance to eliminate fraud, waste, and abuse within federal benefit programs.

Anyone with information about allegations of attempted fraud involving COVID-19 can report it by calling the Justice Department'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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