

PRESS RELEASE

# Evelyn Blevins Sentenced to 51 Months in Prison for COVID-19 Unemployment Insurance Fraud Scheme

Wednesday, August 7, 2024

## For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of Tennessee

Chattanooga, Tenn. – On August 7, 2024, Evelyn Blevins, 48, of South Pittsburg, Tennessee, was sentenced to 51 months' imprisonment by the Honorable Curtis L. Collier, United States District Judge in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Tennessee at Chattanooga. Following her incarceration, she will be on 5 years of supervised release.

As part of the plea agreement filed with the court, Blevins pled guilty to Wire Fraud and Aggravated Identity Theft, in violation of Title 18, U.S.C. §§ 1343 and 1028A, for her involvement in a scheme to defraud COVID-19 unemployment programs in several states. In addition, Blevins was ordered to pay \$109,683 in restitution to the Tennessee and California Departments of Labor, and to forfeit to the United States \$109,683 as part of a money judgment.

According to court documents, from June 2020 through August 2021, Blevins conspired with others to devise a scheme in which she defrauded the United States government and the governments of Tennessee, Alabama, Pennsylvania, and California to obtain money from the states' COVID relief programs in the form of unemployment insurance proceeds funded by the United States government. Specifically, Blevins acquired personal information from others and used it to fraudulently make mass online applications for money earmarked by the states to provide unemployment insurance relief for those affected by the national pandemic. She falsely claimed in the applications that the individuals whose personal information was reflected on the applications worked in those states. The states then mailed debit cards to addresses in

the Eastern District of Tennessee, and Blevins would receive a percentage of the payout of the fraudulent claim. The defendant was personally responsible for the fraudulent distribution of nearly \$110,000 of unemployment protection insurance funds. The scheme itself involved the fraudulent distribution of over \$550,000 in unemployment protection insurance funds.

"The defendant selfishly sought to take advantage of federal and state efforts to provide relief to those most harmed by the COVID pandemic," said United States Attorney Francis M. Hamilton, III. "We remain committed to partnering with all law enforcement agencies to identify and prosecute those who steal from federal relief plan programs, depriving others who are most in need."

"The defendant's actions cheated a program designed to assist people who were suffering as a result of the COVID pandemic," said FBI Special Agent in Charge, Joseph E. Carrico. "Today's sentencing exemplifies the continued commitment of the FBI and our federal and state law enforcement partners to hold those who engage in COVID relief fraud accountable for their actions."

Assistant United States Attorney Steven Neff represented the United States.

The investigation was conducted by the Department of Labor Office of Inspector General and the FBI as part of the Smoky Mountains Financial Crimes Task Force.

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>.

###

## Contact

Rachelle Barnes  
Public Affairs Officers  
(865) 545-4167

*Updated August 7, 2024*

---

## Topics

**CORONAVIRUS**

**FINANCIAL FRAUD**

## Components

[Federal Bureau of Investigation \(FBI\)](#)

[USAO - Tennessee, Eastern](#)