

PRESS RELEASE

Ex-Congressman George Santos Sentenced to 87 Months in Prison for Wire Fraud and Aggravated Identity Theft

Friday, April 25, 2025

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of New York

Santos Filed Fraudulent FEC Reports, Embezzled Funds from Campaign Donors, Stole Identities, Charged Credit Cards Without Authorization, Obtained Unemployment Benefits Through Fraud, and Lied in Reports to the U.S. House of Representatives

Former Congressman George Anthony Devolder Santos was sentenced today by United States District Judge Joanna Seybert at the federal courthouse in Central Islip to 87 months in prison for committing wire fraud and aggravated identity theft. As part of the sentence, Santos was ordered to pay restitution to his victims in the amount of \$373,749.97 and \$205,002.97 in forfeiture. [Santos pleaded guilty in August 2024.](#)

John J. Durham, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York; Matthew R. Galeotti, Head of the Department of Justice's Criminal Division; Christopher G. Raia, Assistant Director in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, New York Field Office (FBI); Harry T. Chavis, Jr., Special Agent in Charge, Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation, New York (IRS-CI New York); and Anne T. Donnelly, Nassau County District Attorney announced the sentence.

"Today, George Santos was finally held accountable for the mountain of lies, theft, and fraud he perpetrated. For the defendant, it was judgment day, and for his many victims including campaign donors, political parties, government agencies, elected bodies, his own family members, and his constituents, it is justice," stated U.S. Attorney Durham. "To Mr. Santos and other dishonest individuals of that ilk, who lie, steal identities and commit frauds to get elected to public office, this prosecution speaks to the truth that my Office is committed to aggressively rooting out public corruption and that public officials who criminally abuse our electoral process will end up in a federal prison."

Mr. Durham expressed his appreciation to the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General and the New York State Department of Labor, for their assistance.

FBI Assistant Director in Charge Raia stated, "Today, former United States Congressman George Santos is held accountable for his repeated criminal dishonesty – financing his election campaign with ill-obtained funds, stealing COVID unemployment benefits, and providing materially false information in his financial disclosure. Santos abused his authority to garner illicit donations and campaign support; ultimately betraying the public's trust and violating our democratic systems. May today's sentencing emphasize the FBI's continued commitment to dismantling any fraudulent scheme designed to unlawfully benefit those in positions of power."

"George Santos blatantly disregarded campaign finance laws and abused the trust of his constituents and contributors. While he may have made a mockery of his position in public office, today's sentencing is justice for those he has wronged. CI New York proudly worked with the Eastern District of New York, the FBI and Nassau County DA's office to ensure that Santos faces the consequences of his years of deception," stated IRS-CI New York Special Agent in Charge Chavis.

"George Santos spent his brief career in public service conning his donors and constituents until the deceit caught up to him and he was exposed as an opportunist and a fraud. Today's lengthy prison sentence is a just ending for a weaver of lies who believed he was above the law," stated Nassau County District Attorney Donnelly. "Being elected to represent any community is accepting a solemn responsibility and a position of great trust. George Santos failed the people he was elected to represent in Nassau County and Queens. He broke that trust and traded in his integrity for designer clothes and a luxury lifestyle. I will continue to work with my partners to root out public corruption and ensure that the crucial standards to which we hold our elected officials and public institutions are upheld."

The counts to which Santos pled guilty relate to the following criminal scheme, as set forth in the superseding indictment:

The Party Program Scheme

During the 2022 election cycle, Santos was a candidate for the United States House of Representatives in New York's Third Congressional District. Nancy Marks, who pleaded guilty on October 5, 2023 to related conduct, was the treasurer for his principal congressional campaign committee, Devolder-Santos for Congress. During this election cycle, Santos and Marks devised and executed a fraudulent scheme to obtain money for

the campaign by submitting materially false reports to the Federal Election Commission (FEC), in which they inflated the campaign's fundraising numbers for the purpose of misleading the FEC, a national party committee, and the public.

The purpose of the scheme was to ensure that Santos and his campaign qualified for a program administered by the national party committee to provide financial and logistical support to Santos's campaign. To qualify for the program, Santos had to demonstrate, among other things, that his congressional campaign had raised at least \$250,000 from third-party contributors in a single quarter.

To create the public appearance that his campaign had met that financial benchmark and was otherwise financially viable, Santos and Marks agreed to falsely report to the FEC that at least 11 of their family members had made significant financial contributions to the campaign. In fact, Santos and Marks both knew that these individuals had neither made the reported contributions nor given authorization for their personal information to be included in such false public reports. In addition, Santos and Marks knew that the national party committee relied on FEC fundraising data to evaluate candidates' qualification for the program, and agreed to falsely report to the FEC that Santos had loaned the campaign significant sums of money, when, in fact, Santos had not made the reported loans and, at the time the loans were reported, did not have the funds necessary to make such loans. These falsely reported loans included one for \$500,000 when in fact Santos had less than \$8,000 in his personal and business bank accounts.

Through the execution of this scheme, Santos and Marks ensured that Santos met the necessary financial benchmarks to qualify for the program administered by the national party committee. As a result of qualifying for the program, the congressional campaign received significant financial support.

As part of his plea agreement, Santos stipulated that he had engaged in the following additional criminal conduct, as set forth in the superseding indictment and other court filings, and agreed that this criminal conduct would be considered by the Court at the time of sentencing:

The Credit Card Fraud Scheme

Between approximately July 2020 and October 2022, Santos devised and executed a fraudulent scheme to steal the personal identity and financial information of contributors to his campaign. He then repeatedly charged contributors' credit cards without their authorization. Because of these unauthorized transactions, funds were transferred to Santos's campaign, to the campaigns of other candidates for elected office, and to his own bank account. To conceal the true source of these funds and to

circumvent campaign contribution limits, Santos falsely represented in FEC filings that some of the campaign contributions were made by other persons, such as his relatives or associates, rather than the true cardholders. Santos did not have authorization to use their names in this way. In furtherance of the scheme, Santos sought out victims he knew were elderly persons suffering from cognitive impairment or decline.

Fraudulent Political Contribution Solicitation Scheme

Beginning in September 2022, during his successful campaign for Congress, Santos operated a limited liability company (Company #1) through which he defrauded prospective political supporters. Santos enlisted a Queens-based political consultant (Person #1) to communicate with prospective donors on Santos's behalf. Santos directed Person #1 to falsely tell donors that, among other things, their money would be used to help elect Santos to the House, including by purchasing television advertisements. In reliance on these false statements, two donors (Contributor #1 and Contributor #2) each transferred \$25,000 to Company #1's bank account, which Santos controlled.

Shortly after the funds were received into Company #1's bank account, the money was transferred into Santos's personal bank accounts—in one instance laundered through two of Santos's personal accounts. Santos then used much of that money for personal expenses. Among other things, Santos used the funds to make personal purchases, including of designer clothing, to withdraw cash, to discharge personal debts, and to transfer money to his associates.

Unemployment Insurance Fraud Scheme

Beginning in approximately February 2020, Santos was employed as a Regional Director of a Florida-based investment firm (Investment Firm #1). By late March 2020, in response to the outbreak of COVID-19 in the United States, new legislation was signed into law that provided additional federal funding to assist out-of-work Americans during the pandemic.

In mid-June 2020, although he was employed and not eligible for unemployment benefits, Santos applied for government assistance through the New York State Department of Labor (NYS DOL), claiming falsely to have been unemployed since March 2020. From that point until April 2021—during which time Santos was working and receiving a salary on a near-continuous basis, and throughout his first unsuccessful run for Congress—he falsely affirmed each week that he was eligible for unemployment benefits when he was not. As a result, Santos fraudulently received more than \$24,000 in unemployment insurance benefits.

False Statements to the House of Representatives

Santos, like all candidates for the House, had a legal duty to file with the Clerk of the United States House of Representatives a Financial Disclosure Statement (House Disclosures) before each election. In his House Disclosures, Santos was personally required to give a full and complete accounting of his assets, income, and liabilities, among other things. He certified that his House Disclosures were true, complete, and correct.

In September 2022, in connection with his second campaign for election to the House, Santos filed a House Disclosure in which he vastly overstated his income and assets. In this House Disclosure, he falsely certified that during the reporting period:

- He had earned \$750,000 in salary from the Devolder Organization LLC, a Florida-based entity of which Santos was the sole beneficial owner;
- He had received between \$1,000,001 and \$5 million in dividends from the Devolder Organization LLC;
- He had a checking account with deposits of between \$100,001 and \$250,000; and
- He had a savings account with deposits of between \$1 million and \$5 million.

These assertions were false: Santos had not received from the Devolder Organization LLC the reported amounts of salary or dividends and did not maintain checking or savings accounts with deposits in the reported amounts. Further, Santos failed to disclose that, in 2021, he received approximately \$28,000 in income from Investment Firm #1 and more than \$20,000 in unemployment insurance benefits from the NYS DOL.

The government's case is being handled by the Office's Public Integrity Section and the Criminal Section of the Office's Long Island Division, along with the Public Integrity Section of the Department of Justice's Criminal Division. Assistant United States Attorneys Ryan Harris, Anthony Bagnuola, and Laura Zuckerwise, along with Trial Attorney John Taddei, are in charge of the prosecution, with assistance from Paralegal Specialists Rachel Friedman and Dinora Orozco.

The Defendant:

GEORGE ANTHONY DEVOLDER SANTOS

Age: 36

Queens, New York

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 23-CR-197 (S-2) (JS)

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