

PRESS RELEASE

False disaster relief applications and other fraud lands former Houstonian in federal prison

Thursday, May 1, 2025

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District of Texas

HOUSTON – A 35-year-old woman has been sentenced for conspiracy to commit wire fraud which resulted in approximately \$620,000 in losses, announced U.S. Attorney Nicholas J. Ganjei.

Cora Chantail Custard, who had resided in both Houston and San Antonio over course of the conspiracy, pleaded guilty Sept. 17, 2024.

U.S. District Judge David Hittner has now ordered Custard to serve 57 months in federal prison to be immediately followed by three years of supervised release. She was also ordered to pay \$621,388 in restitution. In handing down the sentence, the court noted the sophisticated means in which Custard used social media to advertise her services and defrauded the U.S. government and seven different state agencies.

From March 2020 until March 2021, Custard conspired with others to submit false and fraudulent loan applications for financial assistance both personally and on behalf of others.

At the time of the plea, Custard admitted to using her Facebook account to advertise her services to file fraudulent disaster relief applications. Her posts repeatedly described the scheme to her followers as “doing apps,” with the ability to obtain between \$6,000 and \$8,000 for an application within four to seven days of filing.

Custard submitted or caused the submission of over 100 fraudulent Economic Injury Disaster Loan applications, at least 36 of which resulted in advance payments totaling \$345,000.

She also filed at least 30 fraudulent Federal Emergency Management Agency disaster benefit applications related to Hurricane Laura in August 2020 and Hurricane Sally in September 2020. At least 16 of those fraudulent applications resulted in payouts totaling approximately \$75,000.

Additionally, Custard committed several other fraudulent acts like filing over 100 false unemployment insurance applications in Michigan, Illinois and several other states for her own and others' benefits. At least 20 of those fraudulent applications resulted in payments totaling approximately \$200,000.

She was remanded into custody at sentencing.

The Department of Homeland Security-Office of Inspector General (OIG), IRS Criminal Investigation, Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, Social Security Administration-OIG, Small Business Administration-OIG and Department of Labor-OIG conducted the investigation.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Karen M. Lansden prosecuted the case.

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