

PRESS RELEASE

Former Employee of State of Illinois Subcontractor Indicted for Allegedly Fraudulently Obtaining More Than \$4.6 Million in Covid-Relief Benefits

Monday, October 19, 2026

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Northern District of Illinois

CHICAGO – A former employee of a State of Illinois subcontractor has been indicted on federal fraud charges for allegedly fraudulently obtaining more than \$4.6 million in Covid-era unemployment insurance benefits for herself and hundreds of others.

ANDREA WELLINGTON engaged in fraud related to the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (“PUA”) program, one of the sources of relief under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (“CARES”) Act, according to an indictment returned in U.S. District Court in Chicago. Wellington worked as a customer service representative for a company that subcontracted with the Illinois Department of Employment Security (“IDES”). The position gave her access to the IDES PUA system, the indictment states. IDES determined the amount of each payment to be issued to PUA claimants based, in part, on the amount of income that the claimant had earned prior to the filing of their claim for PUA benefits. The more wages reported, the greater the amount of the PUA payment.

The charges allege that in the fall of 2021, after Wellington had been terminated from her position with the IDES subcontractor, she and co-defendant RANDALL EASLEY accessed the IDES PUA system and fraudulently increased the wage histories of hundreds of PUA applicants, causing IDES to disburse approximately \$4,680,582 in PUA payments to which the recipients were not entitled. The indictment alleges that Wellington and Easley modified the wage histories in exchange for thousands of dollars from the applicants.

Wellington, 35, of Chicago, is charged with 21 counts of wire fraud, while Easley, 38, of Chicago, is charged with 14 counts of wire fraud. Wellington and Easley were arraigned in federal court on Oct. 8, 2026, and pleaded not guilty to the charges. A status hearing was set for Oct. 23, 2026, at 10:00 a.m., before U.S. District Judge Elaine E. Bucklo.

The indictment was announced by Andrew S. Boutros, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois; Anthony P. D'Esposito, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Labor; Ryan Whalen, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Field Office of the FBI; and Nicholas Bucciarelli, Inspector-in-Charge of the Chicago Division of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Meredith Havekost.

Each count of wire fraud is punishable by up to 20 years in federal prison. The public is reminded that an indictment contains only charges and is not evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

Consistent with the Administration's priorities to identify, investigate, and prosecute criminal fraud in the federal government entitlement and benefit programs, the United States Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Illinois is taking a fresh look at Covid-19 fraud.

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.

[wellington et al indictment.pdf](#)

Updated October 19, 2026