

Former Bureau Of Prisons Employee Pleads Guilty To Workers' Compensation Fraud

Wednesday, June 7, 2023

For Immediate Release

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

Damian Williams, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, Jonathan Mellone, the Special Agent in Charge of the Northeast Region of the U.S. Department of Labor – Office of Inspector General (“DOL-OIG”), and Michael J. Driscoll, the Assistant Director in Charge of the New York Field Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (“FBI”), announced that ELIZABETH TORRES pled guilty today to a workers’ compensation fraud scheme. TORRES duped the DOL into paying her hundreds of thousands of dollars in federal disability benefits by falsely claiming that she had a debilitating knee injury and, therefore, essentially could not work, but in fact, TORRES was employed full-time for several years during her scheme. TORRES surrendered today and pled guilty before U.S. District Judge Sidney H. Stein, to whom her case is assigned.

U.S. Attorney Damian Williams said: “The federal workers’ compensation program protects qualifying federal employees who suffer legitimate work injuries. But some individuals take advantage of this disability benefit program. As she admitted today, Elizabeth Torres was one such individual. Torres exploited the program for years by lying, in various respects, in order to steal hundreds of thousands of dollars in disability benefits. For her crime, Torres now faces potential prison time.”

DOL-OIG Special Agent in Charge Jonathan Mellone said: “Elizabeth Torres defrauded the Office of Workers’ Compensation Programs of hundreds of thousands of dollars by exaggerating the extent of any work-related injury. She compounded this fraud by failing to inform OWCP for many years about her paid employment. Protecting the integrity of worker compensation programs administered by the Department of Labor is

an important part of the mission of the Office of Inspector General, and we will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to investigate these types of allegations.”

According to the allegations in the Information, court filings, and statements made in court:

Over the course of several years, ELIZABETH TORRES sought and received compensation under the Federal Employees’ Compensation Act (“FECA”). FECA provides benefits to civilian federal employees who sustain injuries as a result of their employment. FECA benefits are administered by the DOL’s Office of Workers’ Compensation Programs (“OWCP”). In order to receive FECA benefits, a claimant must prove that she is disabled by furnishing medical documentation and other evidence with her claim.

Until approximately 2006, TORRES worked as a Corrections Officer for the Bureau of Prisons (“BOP”). BOP employees are eligible to receive FECA benefits. For a number of years, TORRES submitted annual forms to OWCP seeking such benefits. In these forms, TORRES lied in various respects, including by claiming that: (i) she was significantly disabled; (ii) a dependent was living with her for various years; (iii) she was not receiving any pay for various years; and (iv) she was not working or performing volunteer work. More specifically, TORRES claimed in substance and in part that she had a debilitating knee injury and was essentially incapable of performing any work because she experienced pain and swelling within 30 minutes of sitting or standing. But in fact, TORRES was employed full-time from approximately 2015 through 2019 at a drug and alcohol addiction treatment center (the “Clinic”) in New York City, where she served as the Program Director for several years. On one occasion in 2019, TORRES was caught on video dancing in high-heeled boots, with ease, on the sidewalk outside of the Clinic. Finally, to conceal her Clinic employment from OWCP, TORRES was paid indirectly through an entity, and her salary payments were disguised as “rent.”

On the basis of TORRES’s false representations to OWCP, TORRES received benefit payments of more than \$4,000 per month over the course of several years.

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TORRES, 56, of Brooklyn, New York, pled guilty to one count of federal workers’ compensation fraud, which carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison.

The maximum potential sentence in this case is prescribed by Congress and is provided here for informational purposes only, as any sentencing of the defendant will be determined by the judge. TORRES is scheduled to be sentenced by Judge Stein on September 7, 2023, at 2:30 p.m.

Mr. Williams praised the outstanding efforts of the DOL-OIG and FBI.

This matter is being handled by the Office's Complex Frauds and Cybercrime Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Michael D. Neff and Danielle M. Kudla are in charge of the prosecution.

[U.S. v. Torres Information](#)

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