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Former EDD Employee Pleads Guilty to Unemployment Benefits Fraud Scheme

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Pamela Emanuel, 59, of San Jose, pleaded guilty today for her role in a scheme to defraud the state of California by filing false unemployment insurance claims, U.S. Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced.

Emanuel pleaded guilty to mail fraud and aggravated identity theft. According to court documents, Emanuel worked as a tax compliance representative for the California Employment Development Department (EDD) and had access to the personal identifying information of workers throughout California. Between July 22, 2015, and July 14, 2016, Emanuel and her co-conspirators used that information to file fraudulent unemployment claims in the names of the unknowing victims.

In total, the conspirators filed at least 269 false claims seeking over \$2.4 million in fraudulent benefits. EDD's actual overpayment was approximately \$887,199.

“Pamela Emanuel stole information from the Employment Development Department database, thereby violating the public trust afforded to her as a California government employee. The stolen information was then used in a conspiracy to file fraudulent unemployment insurance claims. We will continue to work with our federal and state law enforcement partners to safeguard unemployment compensation benefits programs for those who need it,” said Quentin Heiden, Special Agent-in-Charge of the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, Los Angeles Region.

This case is the product of an investigation by the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the California Employment Development Department, Investigations Division. Assistant U.S. Attorney Amy Schuller Hitchcock is prosecuting the case.

Four other co-conspirators have pleaded guilty and have been sentenced in relation to this scheme. On Aug. 16, 2018, Brittany Maunakea, 30, was sentenced to two and a half years in prison and ordered to pay \$139,071 in restitution. On Sept. 20, 2018, Sergio Doriane Sanchez Reyna, 26, was sentenced to four years and three months in prison and ordered to pay \$436,091 in restitution. On Feb. 22, 2019, Gregory Lee, 57, of Antioch was sentenced to nine years in prison and ordered to pay \$353,458 in restitution. On Sept. 19, Russell White III, 38, of San Jose, was sentenced to four years and three months in prison and ordered to pay \$212,071 in restitution.

Emanuel is scheduled to be sentenced on March 19, 2020. She faces a maximum statutory penalty of 20 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000 for mail fraud, and a mandatory consecutive sentence of two years in prison and a fine of up to \$100,000 for aggravated identity theft. The actual sentence, however, will be determined at the discretion of the court after consideration of any applicable statutory factors and the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of variables.

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