

**PRESS RELEASE**

# **Hancock County Man Sentenced for Theft of Black Lung Benefits**

Wednesday, May 7, 2025

**For Immediate Release**

U.S. Attorney's Office, Northern District of West Virginia

WHEELING, WEST VIRGINIA – Gary Barber, age 75, of Weirton, West Virginia, was sentenced today to three years of probation for the theft of public money, property or records.

According to court documents and statements made in court, Barber's father was a coal miner who was awarded Black Lung benefits. Upon his father's death, those benefits transferred to Barber's widow, Barber's mother. Barber became the payee for the benefits when his mother's health failed, but once his mother passed, he continued to claim the benefits, falsely reporting each month for nearly ten years, that he used the funds for the care of his mother. Barber fraudulently collected \$85,604 from the US Trust Fund.

Barber was ordered to pay \$85,604 in restitution.

"Gary Barber engaged in a scheme to embezzle more than \$85,000 in Black Lung benefits administered by the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP). Barber stole money intended for injured coal miners and their survivors who were eligible for those vital resources. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners and OWCP to protect the integrity of DOL benefit programs," stated Syreeta Scott, Special Agent-in-Charge, Mid-Atlantic Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General.

Barber was ordered to pay \$85,604 in restitution to the US Trust Fund.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Jennifer Conklin prosecuted the case on behalf of the government.

The U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General investigated.

U.S. District Judge John Preston Bailey presided.

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