

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Northern District of New York

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Jury Convicts Maryland Man for Membership in Computer Fraud and Identity Theft Ring that Targeted State Governments

Conviction Follows Guilty Pleas from Six Co-Defendants

ALBANY, NEW YORK - A jury yesterday voted to convict Guy Cuomo a/k/a “John Monaco,” age 54, of Frederick, Maryland, of computer fraud, misuse of a social security number, aggravated identity theft and related conspiracy charges for his role in a scheme to sell information unlawfully obtained from the New York State Department of Labor and workforce agencies in other states.

The announcement was made by United States Attorney Carla B. Freedman and Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent in Charge, New York Region, United States Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General (USDOL-OIG).

United States Attorney Carla B. Freedman stated: “Guy Cuomo and his co-conspirators ran a boiler room for identity theft. They used personal identifying information to trick state workforce agencies into disclosing the last known places of employment for thousands of victims. The defendants then sold this place-of-employment information to debt collectors, generating nearly \$1 million in sales. Yesterday’s guilty verdict, on all counts, means Guy Cuomo will be going to prison for his leadership role in this despicable scheme.”

USDOL-OIG Special Agent in Charge Jonathan Mellone stated: “As found by the jury, Guy Cuomo worked in concert with his co-conspirators to systemically create unemployment insurance accounts in multiple state workforce agencies’ computer systems using the social security numbers and other personal identifiers of unknowing victims. Once in those accounts, Cuomo and his co-conspirators stole the protected employment information of the victims and sold that data commercially. Yesterday’s guilty verdict and the preceding guilty pleas secured in this case are a testament to our office’s unwavering commitment to investigate and bring to justice those who compromise the integrity of the unemployment insurance system.”

The evidence at Cuomo’s 5-day trial showed that Cuomo worked for and managed companies owned by Jason “J.R.” Trowbridge in Frederick, Maryland, including Paymerica Corporation. Paymerica researched where purported debtors worked and sold the employer information—called place-of-employment information or “POE”—to debt collectors and companies selling information to debt collectors. In the debt collecting industry, the process is known as “skiptracing.”

To obtain the place-of-employment information, Cuomo and other members of the conspiracy pretended to be the debtors, created thousands of online unemployment insurance applications in the debtors’ names and with the debtors’ personal identifiers, including social security numbers, and completed the applications to the point where each debtor’s last known place of employment appeared. After confirming that the debtors worked for the relevant employers, Paymerica sold the place-of-employment information for approximately \$90 per debtor. Over the course of

approximately three years, Paymerica made nearly \$1 million selling the stolen place-of-employment information.

Cuomo, Trowbridge, and other conspirators took a number of steps to hide their activities from state agencies and law enforcement, including using Virtual Private Networks, or VPNs, to mask the Internet Protocol addresses used to access and fill out the unemployment insurance applications in the debtors' names. The evidence showed that the scheme involved attempts to obtain place-of-employment information for as many as 200,000 people from all 50 states and that Paymerica sold place-of-employment information for at least 12,000 people from 40 states.

At sentencing on March 16, 2022 before Senior U.S. District Judge Thomas J. McAvoy, Cuomo faces a mandatory 2-year term of imprisonment on the aggravated identity theft charges and up to 20 years in prison on the remaining charges. His co-defendants pled guilty to the following charges and face the following terms of imprisonment when they are sentenced:

Defendant	Charge(s)	Maximum Prison Sentence
Jason "J.R." Trowbridge a/k/a "Ted Frost," age 42, of Frederick, Maryland	Conspiracy, misuse of social security number, aggravated identity theft	Agreed-upon sentence of 39 months subject to approval by the Court
Robin Chapin a/k/a "Thomas Price," age 63, of Frederick, Maryland	Conspiracy to commit computer fraud, accessing a protected computer and obtaining information, aggravated identity theft	Two years for aggravated identity theft, maximum sentence of 10 years on remaining charges
Rebecca Fogle a/k/a "Roxanne Morris" and "Jessica Felton," age 27, of Woodsboro, Maryland	Conspiracy to commit computer fraud, accessing a protected computer and obtaining information, aggravated identity theft	Two years for aggravated identity theft, maximum sentence of 10 years on remaining charges
Shamair Brison a/k/a "Felicia Carter," age 36, of Frederick, Maryland	Aggravated identity theft	Two years
Sarah Bromfield a/k/a "Nicole Wagner," age 41, of Frederick, Maryland	Aggravated identity theft	Two years
Anna Hardy a/k/a "Sarah Thomas," age 68, of Frederick, Maryland	Aggravated identity theft	Two years

A defendant's sentence is imposed by a judge based on the particular statute the defendant is charged with violating, the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, and other factors.

The case was investigated by USDOL-OIG, with assistance from the New York State Department of Labor, Office of Special Investigations, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Joshua R. Rosenthal and Cyrus P.W. Rieck. The case was also prosecuted to indictment by Assistant U.S. Attorney Wayne A. Myers.

Topic(s):

Consumer Protection
Cyber Crime
Financial Fraud
Identity Theft
Labor & Employment

Component(s):

USAO - New York, Northern

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