

PRESS RELEASE

Plymouth Man Pleads Guilty to Submitting Multiple Fraudulent Claims for Pandemic Relief

Wednesday, February 14, 2024

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Massachusetts

BOSTON – A Plymouth, Mass. man pleaded guilty today to his involvement in a COVID-19 relief fund fraud scheme.

Ferris Brooks, 41, pleaded guilty to theft of government property. U.S. Senior District Court Judge William G. Young scheduled sentencing for May 21, 2024. Brooks was charged in October 2023.

From April to December 2020, Brooks submitted multiple applications for government benefits, both in his own name and in the names of friends and family, that contained false information. Specifically, Brooks submitted an application for an Economic Injury Disaster Loan with the U.S. Small Business Administration in the name of a fake business. Brooks also submitted applications for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance and filed tax returns for Economic Impact Payments in the names of friends and family that contained false employment information. Brooks directed payments on the various fraudulent claims to bank accounts that he had opened in his own name and then shared a portion of the proceeds with his friends and family. The various fraudulent claims paid out more than \$150,000 in pandemic relief funds.

The charge of theft of government property provides for a sentence of up to 10 years in prison, up to three years of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and statutes which govern the determination of a sentence in a criminal case.

Acting United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy; Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent in Charge of Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General; Harry Chavis, Jr., Special Agent in Charge of the Internal Revenue Service's Criminal Investigation in Boston; and

Ketty Larco-Ward, Inspector in Charge of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Boston Division made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Markham of the Securities, Financial & Cyber Fraud Unit is prosecuting the case.

On May 17, 2021, the Attorney General established the COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Task Force to marshal the resources of the Department of Justice in partnership with agencies across government to enhance efforts to combat and prevent pandemic-related fraud. The Task Force bolsters efforts to investigate and prosecute the most culpable domestic and international criminal actors and assists agencies tasked with administering relief programs to prevent fraud by, among other methods, augmenting and incorporating existing coordination mechanisms, identifying resources and techniques to uncover fraudulent actors and their schemes, and sharing and harnessing information and insights gained from prior enforcement efforts. For more information on the Department's response to the pandemic, please visit <https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus>.

Anyone with information about allegations of attempted fraud involving COVID-19 can report it by calling the Department of Justice's National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) Hotline at 866-720-5721 or via the NCDF Web Complaint Form at: <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form>.

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