

PRESS RELEASE

Queens Couple Pleads Guilty to \$380,000 COVID Unemployment Fraud Conspiracy

Thursday, January 4, 2024

For Immediate Release

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

ALBANY, NEW YORK – William Taylor, age 33, and Patricia Clarke, age 27, both of Jamaica, New York, pled guilty today to mail and wire fraud conspiracy. Taylor also pled guilty to aggravated identity theft.

The announcement was made by United States Attorney Carla B. Freedman; Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent in Charge, Northeast Region, United States Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General (USDOL-OIG); Matthew Scarpino, Special Agent in Charge of the Buffalo Field Office of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI); Ketty Larco-Ward, Inspector in Charge of the Boston Division of the United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS); and New York State Inspector General (NYSIG) Lucy Lang.

Taylor and Clarke each admitted that they used stolen identities to fraudulently obtain pandemic unemployment insurance benefits from the New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL). They used the names, dates of birth and social security numbers of at least 20 individuals to submit claims to NYSDOL. Based on those false claims, NYSDOL wired funds to accounts controlled by Taylor, Clarke, or both; and NYSDOL directed bank cards to be mailed to the addresses provided by Taylor and Clarke. In total, NYSDOL paid \$381,815 on the claims submitted by Taylor and Clarke under the stolen identities.

The conspiracy conviction carries a maximum term of 20 years in prison; a fine of up to \$250,000; and a term of supervised release of up to 3 years. For Taylor, the aggravated identity theft conviction carries a mandatory term of 2 years in prison that must run consecutively to the prison term imposed on the conspiracy conviction. 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.

Taylor and Clarke agreed to pay \$381,815 in restitution to NYSDOL. In addition, Taylor agreed to forfeit \$315,723 and Clarke agreed to forfeit \$66,092.

USDOL-OIG, HSI, USPIS and NYSIG investigated the case. Assistant U.S. Attorney Jonathan S. Reiner is prosecuting the case.

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