

PRESS RELEASE

Two Plead Guilty to Unemployment Insurance Benefits Fraud Conspiracy

Friday, October 16, 2026

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of California

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Las Vegas residents Ricky Lee Ware, 43, and Kimberly Ann Wallace, 30, pleaded guilty today to conspiracy to commit access device fraud, U.S. Attorney Eric Grant announced.

According to court documents, between July 2020 and January 2021, the defendants conspired to obtain debit cards that allowed them to access unemployment benefits. The unemployment benefits were in the names of people who did not know the defendants. The defendants then used the debit cards to withdraw more than \$900,000 in unemployment benefits from ATMs.

The U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, Homeland Security Investigations, the Federal Bureau of Investigation; and the Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General conducted the investigation. Assistant U.S. Attorney Nicholas M. Fogg is prosecuting the case.

Ware and Wallace are scheduled to be sentenced by U.S. District Judge Dena Coggins on Feb. 19, 2027, and face a maximum of 7.5 years in prison. 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.

The third defendant in the case, Carlos Lee Sanchez Jr., 46, of Sacramento, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit access device fraud in June 2026 and is scheduled to be sentenced Nov. 13, 2026.

This effort is part of a California COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Strike Force operation, one of five interagency COVID-19 fraud strike force teams established by the U.S. Department of Justice. The California Strike Force combines law enforcement and prosecutorial resources in the Eastern and Central Districts of California and focuses on

large-scale, multistate pandemic relief fraud perpetrated by criminal organizations and transnational actors. The strike forces use prosecutor-led and data analyst-driven teams to identify and bring to justice those who stole pandemic relief funds.

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