

**Department of Justice**  
U.S. Attorney's Office  
Western District of Virginia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, July 15, 2021

## **Wise County Man Sentenced in Unemployment Fraud Scheme**

ABINGDON, Va. – A Wise County, Virginia man, who conspired with others to file for fraudulent pandemic unemployment benefits, was sentenced today to 87 months in prison for conspiring to defraud the United States and conspiring to commit mail fraud.

According to court documents, Travis Kilgore, 34, defrauded the government of more than \$182,474 in pandemic unemployment benefits beginning in May 2020. Kilgore was also ordered to pay \$164,470 in restitution. The government previously recouped \$18,004.

“When Kilgore filed numerous false claims for pandemic insurance benefits, he committed a serious crime and stole funds designed to help those truly in need because of the international pandemic,” Acting U.S. Attorney Bubar stated today. “We are thankful for the good work of the investigative team, including the Department of Labor, IRS and our state and local partners, and will continue to closely work together to bring all who stole from these important programs to justice.”

“Travis Kilgore conspired with others to commit fraud against the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program by filing for and receiving benefits that he and others were not entitled to receive. The U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General will continue to work closely with the Virginia Employment Commission and our law enforcement partners, to safeguard the integrity of all unemployment assistance programs,” stated Syreeta Scott, Acting Special Agent-in-Charge of the Philadelphia Region, U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General.

“Fraud involving falsely receiving pandemic relief funds is particularly cold-hearted. Those dishonestly taking advantage of programs meant to help people in need during a global crisis need to be held accountable for their criminal actions. Today, another individual who stole pandemic unemployment benefits received the consequences of their actions,” said Darrell J. Waldon, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the IRS-CI Washington D.C. Field Office.

Kilgore admitted that he and his wife developed a scheme beginning in May 2020 to defraud the United States and the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) through the filing of fraudulent claims for pandemic unemployment benefits.

According to court documents, Kilgore, his wife, and others filed claims for pandemic unemployment benefits through the VEC website. The scheme involved submitting claims for various individuals, including Kilgore and his wife, who were not eligible to receive pandemic unemployment benefits. Kilgore falsified the filings as part of the scheme to appear eligible for benefits. Because pandemic unemployment benefits were paid weekly, Kilgore reverified and re-certified the false statements on numerous occasions throughout the scheme.

In all, Kilgore and his wife filed claims for approximately 21 other individuals, causing at least \$182,474 in false claims to be paid.

The investigation of the case was conducted by the Department of Labor-Office of the Inspector General and the Internal Revenue Service – Criminal Investigation, the Norton Police Department,

and the Russell County Sheriff's Office. Assistant United States Attorney Daniel J. Murphy is prosecuting the case for the United States.

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> .

**Component(s):**

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