

PRESS RELEASE

Yonkers Man Sentenced to 12 Months for Unemployment Insurance Fraud

Wednesday, January 17, 2024

For Immediate Release

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

ALBANY, NEW YORK – Errol Murray, age 22, of Yonkers, New York was sentenced today to 12 months in prison for engaging in a fraudulent scheme to obtain nearly \$70,000 in unemployment insurance benefits, including benefits funded by the federal government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

As part of his [previously entered guilty plea](#), Murray admitted that he provided Jamie Johnson with his personally identifiable information (PII) and the PII of another person, which Johnson used to file false claims online with the New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL). Murray further admitted that as a result of the two fraudulent applications submitted by Johnson, the NYSDOL paid out \$69,954 in unemployment insurance benefits.

Johnson [previously pled guilty](#) to fraudulently obtaining \$701,441 in unemployment insurance benefits as part of the scheme. Murray's co-defendants, [Taliak Lanier](#), age 23, of Albany, and [Thomas Brace](#), a/k/a "Justice," age 62, of Altoona, Pennsylvania, previously pled guilty to charges stemming from their roles in the scheme with Johnson. Lanier was [sentenced](#) to 12 months in prison to be followed by a 3-year term of supervised release, while Brace was sentenced to time served and 3 years of supervised release.

Senior United States District Judge Lawrence E. Kahn also imposed a 3-year term of supervised release, to begin after Murray is released from prison, and ordered him to pay \$69,954 in restitution to the State of New York.

This case was investigated by HSI, USDOL-OIG, USPIA, and the New York State Inspector General's Office, with assistance from the NYSDOL Office of Special Investigations, the Capital Region Crime Analysis Center, and the Albany County Department of Social Services. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Joshua R. Rosenthal and Joseph S. Hartunian prosecuted 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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