

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Eastern District of Michigan

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Farmington Hills Man Indicted in Unemployment Insurance, Credit Card Scams

A Farmington Hills man has been indicted and charged with defrauding the Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency, defrauding credit card companies, and stealing the identities of local residents, United States Attorney Matthew Schneider announced today.

Joining in the announcement were Acting Inspector in Charge Bryan Musgrove, United States Postal Inspection Service, Special-Agent in Charge Andre Martin, United Postal Service – Office of Inspector General and Irene Lindow, Special Agent-in-Charge, Chicago Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General.

“The allegations here include some of the most egregious, brazen abuses of the unemployment fraud system we’ve seen this year,” stated United States Attorney Matthew Schneider. “While thousands of people in Michigan have lost their jobs and are struggling to put food on the table, con artists are stealing unemployment money away from them. We plan to follow the money trail and seek justice in all of these cases.”

Special Agent-in-Charge Andre Martin, Great Lakes Area Field Office, U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General said, “Today’s charges represent our commitment to work with our law enforcement partners to maintain the integrity and trust in the U.S. Mail. The USPS OIG, along with the U.S. Attorney's Office, remain committed to safeguarding the integrity of the U.S. Mail and ensuring the accountability and integrity of U.S. Postal Service employees.”

Acting Inspector in Charge Bryan Musgrove stated, “U.S. Postal Inspectors are federal law enforcement agents who conduct investigations of postal-related crime, including any fraud in which the postal system is used, in an effort to ensure America’s confidence in the U.S. Mail. Investigating violations of more than 200 federal laws, the Postal Inspection Service seeks to enforce these statutes to the maximum extent possible against those aiming, as in this case, to utilize the U.S. Mail in furtherance of illicit activities and criminal schemes.”

“An important mission of the Office of Inspector General is to investigate allegations of fraud related to unemployment insurance benefit programs. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to protect the integrity of unemployment insurance benefit programs,” stated Irene Lindow, Special Agent-in-Charge, Chicago Region, U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General.

Charged is Andre Taylor Jr., 27. The indictment charges Taylor Jr. with four counts of mail fraud, three counts of wire fraud, and three counts of aggravated identity theft.

According to the indictment, Taylor Jr. concocted a scheme to defraud the unemployment insurance agencies of Michigan, Pennsylvania, and other states beginning in approximately April, 2020. Taylor Jr. began his scheme shortly after the passage of the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation program, which allowed eligible unemployment insurance claimants to receive an additional \$600 in federal benefits per week. Taylor Jr. is alleged to have filed unemployment insurance claims to Michigan and other states in the names of various individuals without those

individual's approval or authorization. To capture the fraudulently obtained unemployment insurance benefits, Taylor Jr. generally arranged for the State Unemployment Insurance Agencies to send prepaid debit cards containing the unemployment benefits to addresses Taylor controlled.

In some instances, the prepaid debit cards were mailed to addresses associated with Taylor Jr. or his family members. In other instances, the prepaid debit cards were sent to addresses along postal routes known to Taylor Jr. Taylor Jr. would allegedly direct letter carriers along these routes to secure the mailings containing the prepaid debit cards associated with UI claims. The letter carriers would then provide Defendant with these mailings in exchange for cash bribes.

Taylor's alleged bribes to letter carriers extended beyond securing fraudulently obtained debit cards containing unemployment insurance benefits. The indictment alleges that Taylor also paid the letter carriers to obtain credit and debit cards in the names of individuals who lived along the route. Taylor is alleged to have used these credit and debit cards at local retailers such as Meijer and Kroger to obtain gift cards and other goods.

An indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. Each defendant is entitled to a fair trial in which it will be the government's burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney John K. Neal. The investigation is being conducted jointly by the United States Postal Inspection Service, the United States Postal Service Office of Inspector General, and the United States Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General. The United States Attorney's Office would also like to thank the Michigan State Police-Investigative Support Section and the Lathrup Village Police Department for their assistance in this investigation.