

PRESS RELEASE

# Former Bureau Of Prisons Employee Sentenced To Prison For Workers' Compensation Fraud

Monday, October 30, 2023

## For Immediate Release

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

Damian Williams, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that ELIZABETH TORRES was sentenced to one year and one day in prison today for a decade-long workers' compensation fraud scheme. TORRES duped the U.S. Department of Labor ("DOL") into paying her more than \$600,000 in federal disability benefits by falsely claiming that she had a debilitating knee injury and therefore essentially could not work when in fact TORRES was not disabled and was even employed full-time for several years during her scheme. TORRES's sentence was imposed by U. S. District Judge Sidney H. Stein before whom she previously pleaded guilty.

*U.S. Attorney Damian Williams said: "The federal workers' compensation program protects qualifying employees who suffer legitimate work injuries or illness. But some individuals, like Elizabeth Torres, take advantage of this disability benefit program. For 10 years, Torres lied to the DOL in order to steal more than \$600,000 in disability benefits. For her criminal conduct, Torres has now been sentenced to prison."*

According to the allegations in the Information, court filings, and statements made in court:

From approximately late 2009 until early 2020, ELIZABETH TORRES sought and received compensation under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act ("FECA"). FECA provides benefits to civilian federal employees who sustain an injury or illness as a result of their employment. FECA benefits are administered by the DOL's Office of Workers' Compensation Programs ("OWCP"). To receive FECA benefits, a claimant must prove that she is disabled by furnishing medical documentation and other evidence with her claim.

Until approximately 2006, TORRES worked as a Corrections Officer for the Bureau of Prisons ("BOP"). BOP employees are eligible to receive FECA benefits. For several years, TORRES submitted annual forms to OWCP seeking such benefits. In these forms, TORRES lied in various respects, including by claiming that: (i) she was significantly disabled; (ii) she was not working or performing volunteer work; (iii) she was not receiving any pay for various years; (iv) she was not involved in any business enterprise; and (v) a dependent was living with her for various years. More specifically, and among other things, TORRES claimed that she had a debilitating knee injury and therefore was essentially incapable of performing any work because she experienced pain and swelling within 30 minutes of sitting or standing. But in fact, TORRES was not so disabled, and she had an array of volunteer and paid work from at least approximately 2010 through 2019. Among other roles, TORRES was employed full-time from approximately 2015 through 2019 at a drug and alcohol addiction treatment center (the "Clinic") in New York City, where she served as the Program Director for several years. On one occasion in 2019, TORRES was caught on video dancing with ease in high-heeled boots on the sidewalk outside of the Clinic. To conceal her Clinic employment from OWCP, TORRES was paid indirectly through an entity, and her salary payments were disguised as "rent."

On the basis of TORRES's false representations to OWCP, TORRES received benefit payments of more than approximately \$4,000 per month for 10 straight years, totaling over \$600,000.

\* \* \*

In addition to her prison sentence, TORRES, 57, of Brooklyn, New York, was sentenced to two years of supervised release and ordered to pay restitution of \$603,372.92.

Mr. Williams praised the outstanding investigative efforts of DOL's Office of Inspector General and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

This matter is being handled by the Office's Complex Frauds and Cybercrime Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Michael D. Neff and Danielle M. Kudla are in charge of the prosecution.

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*Updated October 30, 2023*

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**Topic**

**FINANCIAL FRAUD**

**Component**

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