

**Department of Justice**

U.S. Attorney's Office

District of Connecticut

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, August 11, 2015

## **Georgia Woman Admits Stealing Unemployment Benefits Through Fictitious Employer Scheme**

Deirdre M. Daly, United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut, announced that VICKY SUE COHRAN, 53, of Villa Rica, Georgia, waived her right to indictment and pleaded guilty today in New Haven federal court to stealing numerous identities while operating a “fictitious employer scheme” that defrauded state unemployment insurance programs of approximately \$125,000.

According to court documents and statements made in court, state unemployment insurance programs use employee wages as reported by employers to determine an employee's benefit amount when the employee files a valid claim for benefits. COHRAN and others utilized several state unemployment insurance program websites to register businesses that had no actual employees, business operations or normal business expenses. COHRAN and her co-conspirators then created and submitted fictitious wage reports that used names and identifying information of individuals without their knowledge. COHRAN and others then posed as fictitious employees to file claims for unemployment benefits.

Through this scheme, COHRAN and her co-conspirators used the names and identifying information of approximately 27 individuals to steal a total of approximately \$125,000 from the unemployment insurance programs of Connecticut, Massachusetts, Washington, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and New Jersey.

The scheme was uncovered shortly after COHRAN registered a fictitious business with the Connecticut Department of Labor in September 2014. In November 2014, three purported employees of the fictitious business filed claims for unemployment benefits with the Connecticut Department of Labor.

COHRAN pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud, which carries a maximum term of imprisonment of 20 years, one count of aggravated identity theft, which carries a mandatory consecutive term of imprisonment of two years, and misuse of a social security number, which carries a maximum term of imprisonment of five years. She is scheduled to be sentenced by U.S. District Judge Alvin W. Thompson on November 3, 2015, in Hartford.

This ongoing investigation is being conducted by the Social Security Administration – Office of Inspector General, U.S. Department of Labor – Office of Inspector General, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Office of the Chief State’s Attorney, Connecticut Department of Labor, Winter Park (Fla.) Police Department, Pinellas County (Fla.) Sheriff’s Department, Villa Rica (Ga.) Police Department, Temple (Ga.) Police Department and Carroll County (Ga.) Sheriff’s Department.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Douglas P. Morabito.

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Identity Theft

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