

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, June 14, 2022

St. Paul Woman Sentenced for Role in \$499,000 Fraudulent Pandemic Benefits Scheme

ABINGDON, Va. – A Saint Paul, Virginia woman, who was found guilty in February 2022 of conspiracy to defraud the United States, fraud in connection with emergency benefits, conspiracy to commit mail fraud, mail fraud in connection with emergency benefits, and aggravated identity theft, was sentenced today to 27 months in federal prison.

Marissa Leanna Kiser, 27 was found guilty by a jury in February 2022 of conspiring with Leelynn Danielle Chytka, Gregory Marcus Elmer Tackett, Jeffery Ryan Tackett, and others to commit fraud against the United States in connection with the filing of fraudulent claims for pandemic unemployment benefits. Kiser lived with both Gregory Tackett and Leelynn Chytka, the ringleader of the widespread conspiracy, at the time of her involvement in the scheme, and provided her personal information to Chytka for the purpose of filing a fraudulent claim on her behalf.

Over the course of nine months, members of the conspiracy filed fraudulent claims with the Virginia Employment Commission on behalf of at least 37 individuals, with a total actual loss of at least \$499,000.

United States Attorney Christopher R. Kavanaugh of the Western District of Virginia; Syreeta Scott, Special Agent-in-Charge, Philadelphia Region, U.S. Department of Labor - Office of Inspector General, and Special Agent in Charge Darrell J. Waldon of the Internal Revenue Service- Criminal Investigation made the announcement.

The Department of Labor - Office of the Inspector General, the Internal Revenue Service – Criminal Investigation - Washington, D.C. Field Office, the Norton Police Department, and the Russell County Sheriff's Office investigated the case.

Assistant United States Attorneys Daniel J. Murphy and Michael Baudinet 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 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>.

Topic(s):

Coronavirus

Component(s):

USAO - Virginia, Western