

Atlanta man sentenced for stealing identities to file false unemployment claims

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For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Northern District of Georgia

ATLANTA - Jeremy Graves has been sentenced for theft of government funds and aggravated identity theft for stealing identities to file fraudulent Unemployment Insurance ("UI") claims during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Congress enacted the CARES Act to provide federal funds to assist unemployed workers during a national emergency," said U.S. Attorney Ryan K. Buchanan. "Graves defrauded this critical program and stole the identities of others to perpetrate the crime. Our office will continue to partner closely with federal, state, and local investigators to prosecute individuals who commit benefits fraud at the expense of citizens for whom this support is essential."

"Jeremy Graves defrauded multiple state unemployment insurance (UI) systems by using the personally identifying information (PII) of identity theft victims, including the PII of deceased individuals, to submit fraudulent UI claims. DOL-OIG will continue to work with our federal and state partners to protect the integrity of UI benefit programs," said Mathew Broadhurst, Special Agent-in-Charge, Southeast Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General.

According to U.S. Attorney Buchanan, the charges and other information presented in court: During the period from about July 2020 until October 2020, Graves filed approximately 39 UI applications, using 37 different stolen identities, in the states of Georgia, Arizona, California, Maryland, and Nevada. He directed payment of the benefits to designated debit cards. To conceal his identity, he directed the debit cards to be sent to various addresses around the Atlanta area, all near or close by his residence. He then fraudulently received more than \$200,000 in UI benefits from the states of Georgia and California.

Graves's scheme unraveled when the Department of Labor, the agency who oversees the UI program, determined that multiple applications in multiple states had been filed from Graves's residence. Graves had contacted a bank about multiple UI debit cards issued to multiple individuals. A search of Graves's cell phone revealed a search history for "unemployment fraud," "California unemployment," and several of the addresses where he directed the debit cards be sent.

Jeremy Graves, 39, of Atlanta, Georgia, has been sentenced by U.S. District Judge Sarah E. Geraghty to three years, eleven months in prison to be followed by three years of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$209,214 in restitution; \$193,179 to Georgia Department of Labor and \$16,035 to California EDD. Graves was convicted on the charges on August 23, 2023, after he pleaded guilty.

This case was investigated by the Department of Labor - Office of Inspector General.

Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Diane C. Schulman 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>.

For further information please contact the U.S. Attorney's Public Affairs Office at USAGAN.PressEmails@usdoj.gov or (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is <http://www.justice.gov/usao-ndga>.

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