

Augusta man sentenced to prison for COVID-19 scheme that netted more than \$4.5 million in loans and grants

Wednesday, June 21, 2023

For Immediate Release

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

STATESBORO, GA: A Richmond County man has been sentenced to federal prison for conducting a scheme to submit fraudulent applications for COVID-19 small business relief funding that netted more than \$4.5 million in payments.

Kamario Thomas, 42, of Augusta, was sentenced to 38 months in prison after pleading guilty to Conspiracy to Commit Wire Fraud and Money Laundering, said Jill E. Steinberg, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Georgia. U.S. District Court Chief Judge J. Randal Hall also ordered Thomas to pay \$4,546,945 in restitution to the U.S. Small Business Administration, and to serve three years of supervised release upon completion of his prison term.

There is no parole in the federal system.

"In collaboration with our law enforcement partners, we continue to pursue those who illegally profited from a COVID-19 program designed to help struggling small businesses," said U.S. Attorney Steinberg. "Kamario Thomas defrauded the government and aided other individuals in stealing money from the taxpayers, and this sentence holds him accountable."

The 2020 Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act provided more than \$650 billion in funding for qualifying small businesses facing financial challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, with grants and forgivable loans available through the Paycheck Protection Plan (PPP) or Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL).

As described in court documents and testimony, Thomas completed false and fraudulent EIDL applications for himself, and received hundreds of thousands of dollars in kickbacks in return for completing and submitting fraudulent PPP and EIDL applications on behalf of others. To create those applications, Thomas fabricated IRS forms and tax records.

In total, the scheme caused the disbursement of more than \$4.5 million in fraudulent CARES Act loans and grants.

"Individuals who provided fraudulent information to gain access to SBA funds intended to support eligible small businesses will face justice," said SBA OIG's Eastern Region Special Agent in Charge Amaleka McCall-Brathwaite. "I want to thank the U.S. Department of Justice and our law enforcement partners for their dedication and pursuit of justice."

"IRS-CI will continue working with our law enforcement partners to investigate and prosecute individuals who fraudulently received funds from programs under the CARES Act," said Lisa Fontanette, acting Special Agent in Charge, IRS Criminal Investigation, Atlanta Field Office. "Kamario Thomas' sentencing sends a clear message that individuals who defraud the government will be held accountable."

"Greed has no place in the relief programs intended to aid the nation's hardworking small business owners who struggled during the pandemic," said Keri Farley, Special Agent in Charge of FBI Atlanta. "This sentence should serve as an example to others that the FBI will work with our law enforcement partners to stop people like Thomas who illegally profit from these programs and hurt law abiding business owners."

The case was investigated by the Small Business Administration Office of Inspector General, IRS Criminal Investigation, the FBI, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and the Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, and prosecuted for the United States by Assistant U.S. Attorney Jenifer A. Stanley.

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](tel:866-720-5721) or via the NCDF Web Complaint Form at: <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form>.

Contact

Barry L. Paschal, Public Affairs Officer: 912-652-4422

Updated June 21, 2023

Topics

CORONAVIRUS

DISASTER FRAUD

Components

[Federal Bureau of Investigation \(FBI\)](#)

[USAO - Georgia, Southern](#)

Press Release Number: 49-23