

PRESS RELEASE

Bloomington Woman Sentenced to 7.5 Years in Prison for \$7.1 Million Fraud Scheme

Tuesday, August 15, 2023

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Minnesota

ST. PAUL, Minn. – A Bloomington woman was sentenced to 90 months in prison, three years of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$4.7 million in restitution for defrauding federal pandemic programs, announced United States Attorney Andrew M. Luger.

According to court documents, from June 2020 through January 2022, Tequisha Solomon, 40, executed a scheme to fraudulently obtain pandemic assistance money from various states, including Minnesota's Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) and California's Employment Development Department (EDD).

As part of the fraud scheme, Solomon sought Unemployment benefits (UI) from states where she had no lawful basis to receive them. For example, while Solomon resided in Minnesota and Nevada, she falsely claimed to California's EDD that she worked and resided in Los Angeles, California. As a result, California's EDD paid Solomon at least \$37,000 in periodic UI payments between approximately in 2020 and 2021, during which time she actually resided in Minnesota or Nevada.

Solomon also unlawfully sought to obtain UI benefits from multiple states simultaneously. For instance, in October 2020, Solomon fraudulently claimed UI benefits from the Illinois Department of Employment Security when she was actually residing in Minnesota and was already fraudulently receiving UI benefits from California's EDD. In March 2021, Solomon fraudulently applied for UI from Minnesota's DEED, and concealed her fraudulent receipt of UI benefits from California and Illinois.

In addition to fraudulently obtaining pandemic-related benefits for herself, Solomon also assisted others to obtain pandemic-related funds in exchange for a fee, often as much as \$2,000. Solomon submitted over 200 false and fraudulent applications for UI benefits on behalf of others.

In total, Solomon fraudulently applied for \$7,149,032 in pandemic-related funds and caused the United States and multiple state agencies to pay out at least \$4,708,191 in the form of fraudulent UI benefits and small business loan proceeds.

On December 13, 2022, Solomon pleaded guilty to one count of wire fraud. She was sentenced today in U.S. District Court before Judge Eric C. Tostrud.

This case is the result of an investigation conducted by the FBI, the U.S. Department of Labor-Office of Inspector General, and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, with assistance from the St. Paul Police Department and the California Employment Development Department.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Matthew S. Ebert prosecuted the case.

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