

PRESS RELEASE

California Man Accused of Defrauding the Federal Government Over \$100,000 in Unemployment Benefits During COVID-19

Thursday, January 4, 2024

For Immediate Release

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

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah – An indictment was unsealed after a California man was arrested and is scheduled to appear in a Salt Lake City federal courthouse. The eight count indictment charges the defendant for unlawfully collecting unemployment insurance during COVID-19 from California while living and working in Utah. He also allegedly assisted others in committing the same acts for a cut of their unemployment insurance funds administered under the CARES Act.

According to court documents, Robert James Waff, 49, of Sacramento, CA, allegedly submitted an online application for unemployment insurance (UI) benefits on June 19, 2020, through the California Employment Development Department (EDD) website, while he was a resident of Clearfield, Utah. Waff listed his residence and mailing address as Fair Oaks, CA. Waff also claimed he had lost employment due to COVID-19 and that before losing employment his annual income was \$44,000, and that he planned to return to work for his previous employer. Waff's fraudulent California EDD application and continued renewal of his California EDD benefits resulted in Waff receiving over \$36,000 in fraudulent payments.

Beginning in July 2020, Waff also allegedly helped three coconspirators apply for COVID-19 related California unemployment benefits through the California EDD website. None of the applicants lived or worked in the state of California. In return, Waff requested a cash payout from each applicant as compensation for assisting with the

false application. As a result of the fraudulent filings, the actual loss resulting from fraudulent UI benefit claims exceeded \$100,000.

Waff is charged with one count of wire fraud, three counts of wire fraud aiding and abetting, and four counts of mail fraud aiding and abetting. His initial court appearance on the indictment is scheduled for Jan. 5, 2024, at 1:00 p.m. in courtroom 8.4 before a U.S. Magistrate Judge at the Orrin G. Hatch United States District Courthouse in downtown Salt Lake City.

U.S. Attorney, Trina A. Higgins, of the District of Utah made the announcement.

The case is being investigated jointly by the FBI Salt Lake City Division and the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General (OIG).

Assistant United States Attorney Brian Williams of the District of Utah is prosecuting the case.

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>.

An indictment is merely an allegation and all defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

Contact

Felicia Martinez

Public Affairs Specialist

Felicia.martinez@usdoj.gov

(801) 325-3237

[USAO-UT](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#)

Updated January 4, 2024

Topics

CORONAVIRUS

SECURITIES, COMMODITIES, & INVESTMENT FRAUD

Component

[USAO - Utah](#)

Press Release Number: 24-02