

PRESS RELEASE

Florida Man Admits to Fraudulently Obtaining More Than \$1.5 Million in Unemployment Benefits and EIDL Loans

Thursday, September 14, 2023

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of New Jersey

NEWARK, N.J. – A Florida man admitted that he illegally obtained more than \$1.5 million in government benefits, U.S. Attorney Philip R. Sellinger announced today.

Michael Blanc, 34, of Miami, Florida, pleaded guilty on Sept. 13, 2024, before U.S. District Judge Michael A. Shipp in Trenton federal court on to an information charging him with wire fraud.

“This defendant admitted taking advantage of government programs that were specifically designed to provide needed financial assistance to Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic,” U.S. Attorney Sellinger said. “Combatting pandemic fraud in all of its forms is a top priority for this office and our law enforcement partners. Together, we will continue to root out those who have exploited the suffering of others to line their own pockets, and bring them to justice.”

According to documents filed in the case and statements made in court:

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act is a federal law designed to provide emergency financial assistance to Americans suffering the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. It expanded states’ ability to provide assistance to many workers impacted by COVID-19, including for workers who are not ordinarily eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. The CARES Act also enabled the Small Business Association (SBA) to offer funding through the COVID-19 Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL) program to business owners negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Blanc and others applied for unemployment insurance benefits in others' names without their knowledge or consent and provided false information to induce state workforce agencies to approve those applications. He and others applied for EIDLs in others' names without their knowledge or consent and provided false information in the applications to induce the SBA to approve the loan applications. Blanc and others obtained more than \$1.5 million through their fraudulent scheme.

The charge of wire fraud is punishable by a maximum potential penalty of 20 years in prison and a fine of the greater of \$250,000, twice the gross profits to Blanc or twice the gross loss suffered by the victims. Sentencing is scheduled for Jan. 24, 2024.

U.S. Attorney Sellinger credited special agents of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Jonathan Mellone, in New York, and the U.S. Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Scott Moffit, Cybercrime Investigations Division, with the investigation leading to today's guilty plea. He also thanked the FBI, Miami Division, and the New Jersey Department of Labor & Workforce Development for their assistance.

The government is represented by Senior Trial Counsel Andrew Kogan of the U.S. Attorney's Office Cybercrime Unit in Newark.

[blanc.information.pdf](#) (117 KB)

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Topic

FINANCIAL FRAUD

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