

PRESS RELEASE

Four Capital Region Men Charged with Pandemic Fraud Scheme

Thursday, July 20, 2023

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Northern District of New York

Indictment Alleges They Conspired with Corrupt New York State Employee in Scheme to Obtain Unemployment Insurance Benefits

ALBANY, NEW YORK – Todd Ward a/k/a “Fats,” age 44, of Troy, New York; Christopher Ward a/k/a “Reek,” age 45, of Troy; Rocco Resciniti a/k/a “Rock,” age 49, of Albany; and a fourth defendant have been indicted for conspiring with a former New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) employee to fraudulently obtain unemployment insurance benefits in the names of other people.

The announcement was made by United States Attorney Carla B. Freedman; Janeen DiGuseppi, Special Agent in Charge of the Albany Field Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); and Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent in Charge, Northeast Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General (USDOL-OIG).

United States Attorney Carla B. Freedman stated: “As alleged, the defendants teamed up with a corrupt state employee to arrange for the submission of fraudulent unemployment benefits applications. The COVID-19 national emergency is over, but with our federal and state law enforcement partners, we continue to investigate and prosecute those who viewed the pandemic as an opportunity to steal from government.”

FBI Special Agent in Charge Janeen DiGuseppi stated: “The scheme alleged in this case took crucial funding designed to assist hardworking Americans away from those struggling during the COVID-19 pandemic. Today’s arrests should serve as a warning to all that the FBI, along with our law enforcement partners, will not allow critical benefits program funding to be exploited by criminals looking to line their own pockets.”

USDOL-OIG Special Agent in Charge Jonathan Mellone stated: “An important part of the mission of the Office of Inspector General is to investigate allegations relating to

unemployment insurance fraud, particularly when they involve insider threats. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners and state workforce agencies to aggressively investigate these types of allegations.”

The indictment alleges that from about November 2020 to September 2021, Todd Ward, Christopher Ward, Resciniti and a fourth defendant conspired to submit fraudulent unemployment insurance applications in the names of other people by passing along personally identifiable information of at least 13 individuals to NYSDOL employee Carl J. DiVeglia III. DiVeglia then abused his NYSDOL computer systems access to submit and approve fraudulent unemployment benefits applications and to release benefits payments on those false claims. According to the indictment, the defendants each received a share of the benefits paid out by NYSDOL. The charges in the indictment are merely accusations. The defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

Todd Ward, Christopher Ward, and Resciniti appeared today before United States Magistrate Judge Daniel J. Stewart and were released with conditions. A fourth defendant has yet to be arrested.

The defendants are charged with mail fraud and conspiracy to commit mail fraud. These charges carry a maximum term of 20 years in prison, a fine of up to \$250,000, and a term of supervised release of up to 3 years. A defendant’s sentence is imposed by a judge based on the particular statute the defendant is charged with violating, the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other factors.

DiVeglia [pled guilty](#) to mail fraud and aggravated identity theft charges before Chief United States District Judge Glenn T. Suddaby on April 13, 2022. DiVeglia admitted responsibility for over \$1.6 million in losses to NYSDOL and to personally receiving approximately \$225,000 in fraud proceeds.

The FBI and USDOL-OIG are investigating this case, with assistance from the NYSDOL Office of Special Investigations, and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Joseph S. Hartunian and Joshua R. Rosenthal are prosecuting this 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>.

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