

PRESS RELEASE

# Second Wayne County Man Charged With Committing Covid-19 Pandemic Fraud

Wednesday, February 14, 2024

## For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Middle District of Pennsylvania

SCRANTON - The United States Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Pennsylvania announced today that Robert M. Reynolds, age 69, of Newfoundland, Pennsylvania, was charged in an information with wire fraud.

According to United States Attorney Gerard M. Karam, the information alleges that from May 2020 to August 2021, Reynolds aided and abetted another in submitting a fraudulent application and weekly certifications for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) benefits with the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry. The application and weekly certifications allegedly claimed that Reynolds was unemployed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, had earnings for each quarter of 2019, and was available to accept employment if offered a job, when in fact, he was a retiree. Reynolds allegedly obtained approximately \$36,000 in PUA benefits as a result of the scheme.

The PUA program was created by the March 2020 CARES Act, as part of the United States government's efforts to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the public's health and economic well-being. The PUA program was designed to provide unemployment benefits to individuals not eligible for regular unemployment compensation or extended unemployment benefits.

In May 2023, the United States Attorney's Office unsealed charges against a related defendant, Christopher J. Miller, formerly of Newfoundland, Pennsylvania. Miller was charged with 54 combined counts of wire fraud, bank fraud false statements, identity theft, and unlawful monetary transactions, for allegedly obtaining over \$1,500,000 in pandemic stimulus funds for himself and for others. Miller was arrested, detained, and pleaded guilty. He awaits sentencing.

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and by the Department of Labor, Office of the Inspector General. Assistant U.S. Attorney Phillip J. Caraballo is prosecuting the case.

The maximum penalties under federal law are 20 years of imprisonment, a term of supervised release following imprisonment, and a fine. A sentence following a finding of guilt is imposed by the Judge after consideration of the applicable federal sentencing statutes and the Federal Sentencing Guidelines.

Informations are only allegations. All persons charged are presumed to be innocent unless and until found guilty in court.

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