

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Eastern District of Michigan

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Center Line Resident Sentenced in Unemployment Fraud Scheme

DETROIT – A Center Line woman was sentenced to 18 months in prison today based on her conviction for stealing over \$300,000 as part of a wire fraud scheme targeting pandemic unemployment assistance benefits, announced United States Attorney Dawn N. Ison.

Joining Ison in the announcement were James A. Tarasca, Special Agent in Charge of the Detroit Field Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Irene Lindow, Special Agent in Charge of the Chicago Region of the Department of Labor-Office of the Inspector General.

April Rienstra, 52, was sentenced by United States District Judge Bernard A. Friedman following her November 2022 guilty plea to one count of wire fraud arising from a scheme to defraud the Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency (MUIA).

According to Court documents, between April 2020 and May 2021, Rienstra defrauded the MUIA by submitting false applications for pandemic unemployment benefits on behalf of herself and others (who paid her a fee). Ultimately, her scheme involved dozens of fraudulent claims and resulted in over \$300,000 in losses to the MUIA.

In addition to the 18 months of imprisonment, Rienstra was ordered to pay \$318,760 in restitution.

United States Attorney Ison stated, “Enhanced assistance for unemployed workers was a key lifeline for many of our district’s citizens during the pandemic. Unfortunately, those enhanced benefits attracted criminals seeking to exploit the system and enrich themselves at the public’s expense. Our office will remain vigilant in our pursuit of those who cheat the government and their fellow citizens.”

“Ms. Rienstra defrauded a system designed to provide much needed support to individuals who were unemployed because of the pandemic. Her actions potentially prevented those who legitimately needed financial support during difficult times from receiving vital assistance,” said James A. Tarasca, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI in Michigan. “The FBI and our partners are committed to holding those who defraud the government accountable for their crimes.”

“April Rienstra defrauded the State of Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency of more than \$300,000 by filing multiple fraudulent unemployment insurance claims that she was not entitled to. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners and state workforce agencies to protect the integrity of unemployment insurance benefit programs,” said Irene Lindow, Special Agent-in-Charge, Great Lakes Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Alyse Wu. The investigation was conducted jointly by the FBI and the Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General.

Component(s):

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