

PRESS RELEASE

Former Fort Worth Resident Sentenced to Five Years in Federal Prison for Unemployment Benefits Fraud

Monday, February 23, 2026

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Northern District of Texas

A former Fort Worth, Texas resident was sentenced to five years in federal prison for his role in fraudulently obtaining unemployment benefits from the United States Department of Labor, announced United States Attorney for the Northern District of Texas Ryan Raybould.

Mark Alan Valles, 51, previously of Fort Worth, Texas, pled guilty in October 2025 to the federal offense of conspiring to steal government funds. On February 20, 2026, Chief U.S. District Judge Reed O'Connor sentenced Valles to 60 months in federal prison. He also ordered Valles to pay \$407,724 in restitution to the U.S. Department of Labor and the Small Business Administration.

"This defendant exploited government programs and stole funds intended to aid Americans during a critical economic period in this country," said U. S. Attorney Ryan Raybould. "I applaud the diligent work of our law enforcement partners in uncovering the fraud scheme and seeing justice done in this case."

"Mark Valles conspired with others to defraud the Texas Workforce Commission, U.S. Government, and the American taxpayers in an unemployment insurance fraud scheme that enriched himself at a time when millions of Americans desperately needed the money," stated Anthony P. D'Esposito, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General. "My office is committed to protecting the integrity of the unemployment insurance program by vigorously pursuing those who commit this type of fraud. Fraud will not be tolerated. Accountability is not optional."

Court documents indicate that from approximately April 2020 through September 2021, Valles and others conspired to unlawfully use stolen personal identifying information of at least 44 victims to fraudulently obtain unemployment insurance funds administered

by the Texas Workforce Commission (“TWC”) and funded by the U.S. Department of Labor (“DOL”). Valles and his coconspirators used the stolen information to fill out false applications claiming a total of \$899,719 in benefits to be loaded onto debit cards. They directed the associated debit cards to be mailed to a physical address accessible by Valles or others, retrieved the debit cards from the particular address, and withdrew cash from multiple ATM machines at banks in Fort Worth and the surrounding areas. Valles caused a loss to the government of more than \$407,000.

The investigation was conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor–Office of Inspector General, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security–Office of the Inspector General. Assistant U.S. Attorney Mark McDonald prosecuted the case.

Contact

USATXN.Media@usdoj.gov

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FINANCIAL FRAUD

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