

PRESS RELEASE

Husband & wife plead guilty to wire fraud related to pandemic relief funds

Monday, June 16, 2025

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District of Ohio

CINCINNATI – A West Chester couple pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court today to committing wire fraud to obtain pandemic relief funds. The husband and wife were owners or associates of multiple transportation firms.

Ajay Chawla, 60, and his wife, Ruhi Chawla, 50, admitted that they fraudulently received more than \$900,000 in pandemic relief funds. Specifically, they received four Payroll Protection Plan (PPP) loans and three Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL).

According to their court documents, on their loan applications, the Chawlas falsely reported the number of employees and gross revenues for their businesses: Prime Transportation and Logistics Inc., ABC Trucking Inc., Apex Truck Lines LLC and A1 Diesel Truck Repair LLC. Ajay Chawla also submitted a false statement to Department of Transportation Office of Inspector General and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration regarding the ownership of Apex Truck Lines.

"The investigative efforts of the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) and its partners, along with the prosecutorial work of the U.S. Attorney's Office, demonstrate the commitment to pursuing, capturing, and prosecuting those who try to defraud the American people," said TIGTA Special Agent-in-Charge Kelly Moening.

"Today's guilty pleas underscore our steadfast commitment to identifying and addressing fraud that undermines the integrity of Department of Transportation programs and requirements," said Anthony Licari, Special Agent in Charge, Department of Transportation Office of Inspector General, Midwestern Region. "Greed has no place in pandemic relief programs, and together with our law enforcement and prosecutorial partners, we will continue to hold offenders accountable."

The couple were charged in March 2025 by a bill of information.

Wire fraud is punishable by up to 20 years in prison. Congress sets minimum and maximum statutory sentences. Sentencing of the defendant will be determined by the Court based on the advisory sentencing guidelines and other statutory factors at a future hearing.

Assistant United States Attorney Anthony Springer is representing the United States in this case, which was investigated by the Department of Transportation Office of Inspector General (DOT-OIG), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), Department of Labor Office of Inspector General and Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration.

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