

PRESS RELEASE

Inglewood Woman Arrested on Federal Indictment Alleging Scheme to Fraudulently Obtain \$1.3 Million in COVID-19 Jobless Benefits

Thursday, July 3, 2025

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Central District of California

LOS ANGELES – An Inglewood woman has been arrested on a 14-count federal grand jury indictment alleging she fraudulently obtained more than \$1.3 million in COVID-19 pandemic relief funds by submitting more than 100 fraudulent applications for unemployment insurance (UI) benefits using stolen identities, including those of California state prisoners, the Justice Department announced today.

Selena Stewart, 45, was arrested and arraigned on Wednesday.

At her arraignment, she pleaded not guilty to 10 counts of mail fraud, one count of use of unauthorized access devices, two counts of aggravated identity theft, and one count possession of at least 15 unauthorized access devices. An August 26 trial date is scheduled for this case.

A federal magistrate judge ordered Stewart released on \$10,000 bond.

According to the indictment, from March 2020 to December 2020, Stewart and co-defendants Toby Brazier, 48, of the Westlake area of Los Angeles, and Tony Queen, 67, of Culver City, filed with the California Employment Development Department (EDD) fraudulent applications for UI benefits in the names of other people. EDD administers California's unemployment benefits program. The applications were filed using the personal identifying information (PII) obtained from individuals whose information was used without their permission, as well as individuals who did not qualify for UI benefits because they were in the custody of California state prisons.

The fraudulent applications falsely stated that the purported applicants had been negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which triggered eligibility for UI benefits under federal law. The applications also falsely stated that the named claimants resided and had worked in California. In fact, most identity theft victims in this scheme did not live in California. The applications also provided false mailing addresses, false annual income information, and representations that the named claimants were self-employed individuals who were adversely impacted by COVID-19.

As a result of the bogus UI applications that Stewart, Queen, and Brazier filed, EDD authorized Bank of America to issue debit cards in the names of dozens of victims and straw claimants. Once in possession of the debit cards, the defendants withdrew the UI benefits loaded onto the debit cards by making cash withdrawals at ATMs and bank branches and by using the debit cards to buy items sold at businesses.

In total, Stewart, Brazier and Queen, caused at least 101 fraudulent applications for UI benefits to be filed, causing losses to EDD and the United States Treasury exceeding \$1.3 million.

Brazier and Queen are charged with 10 counts of mail fraud. Queen is expected to appear next week in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles for his arraignment and initial appearance. Brazier is considered a fugitive.

An indictment contains allegations that a defendant has committed a crime. Every defendant is presumed to be innocent until and unless proven guilty in court.

If convicted, Stewart would face a statutory maximum sentence of 20 years in federal prison for each mail fraud count, up to 10 years in federal prison for the unauthorized access device count, a mandatory two-year consecutive prison sentence for each aggravated identity theft count and 10 years in federal prison for the possession of least 15 unauthorized access device count.

The United States Department of Labor Office of Inspector General; the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General; and the California Employment Development Department Investigation Division are investigating this matter.

Assistant United States Attorneys Clifford Mpare of the Domestic Security and Immigration Crimes Section and Christina Lopez of the General Crimes Section are prosecuting this case.

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>.

Contact

Ciaran McEvoy
Public Information Officer
ciaran.mcevoy@usdoj.gov
(213) 894-4465

Updated July 3, 2025

Topics

CORONAVIRUS
FINANCIAL FRAUD

Component

[USAO - California, Central](#)