

PRESS RELEASE

Nigerian Man Convicted On Multiple Charges Including Wire Fraud, Conspiracy To Commit Money Laundering, And Aggravated Identity Theft

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For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Colorado

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DENVER – The United States Attorney's Office for the District of Colorado announces that Ikponmwosa Erhinmwinrose, 39, of Atlanta, Georgia, was convicted by a federal jury on six counts of wire fraud, three counts of aggravated identity theft, one count of wire fraud conspiracy, and one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering.

According to the evidence presented at trial, Erhinmwinrose and other conspirators in his fraud ring stole more than \$7.6 million in government benefits from the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program, multiple state unemployment insurance programs including from the state of Colorado, and tax refunds. The economic relief programs were launched by the federal government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

To obtain these benefits, Erhinmwinrose and other conspirators in his fraud ring used the stolen identities of more than 1,000 victims. As a result of Erhinmwinrose's actions, identity-theft victims never received IRS stimulus payments, received letters in the mail stating that they had to start repaying loans that Erhinmwinrose had taken out in their names, and faced backlash on social media because others thought they had taken out large loans that in fact went to Erhinmwinrose and other members of his fraud ring. To facilitate the criminal activity, Erhinmwinrose created dozens of email accounts under false names to impersonate real individuals and businesses, worked with conspirators to submit fraudulent applications for benefits, and then instructed a network of conspirators to launder the proceeds through multiple bank accounts before converting the money to cash or transferring it overseas.

United States District Judge Charlotte N. Sweeney presided over the trial.

The Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, FDIC Office of Inspector General, Small Business Administration (SBA) Office of Inspector General, U.S. Postal Inspection

Service, and U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General handled the investigation.

Assistant United States Attorneys Craig Fansler and Sonia Dave handled the prosecution.

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>

Case Number: 1-23-cr-00300-CNS

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