

PRESS RELEASE

Oakland Woman Who Made Multiple Fraudulent Unemployment Insurance Claims Using Stolen Identities Sentenced To 33 Months And One Day

Monday, March 31, 2025

For Immediate Release

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

Co-Defendant Previously Sentenced to 24 Months and One Day

SAN FRANCISCO – Kari Marie Russo was sentenced today to 33 months and one day in federal prison for submitting numerous fraudulent unemployment insurance claims using stolen identities. U.S. District Judge James Donato handed down the sentence.

Russo, 46, and her co-defendant Steven Dunsmore, 35, both of Oakland, were indicted by a federal grand jury on Oct. 3, 2023. A federal grand jury also indicted Russo on Sept. 17, 2024, on a single count of failure to appear. On Dec. 10, 2024, Russo pleaded guilty to two counts of fraudulent use of unauthorized access device, two counts of aggravated identity theft, and one count of failure to appear.

According to court documents, beginning in June 2020, Russo and Dunsmore engaged in an elaborate scheme to submit fraudulent unemployment insurance claims to California's Employment Development Department (EDD) using other people's personally identifying information, such as their names, dates of birth, and Social Security numbers, without their authorization.

As a result of the fraudulent applications, Dunsmore and Russo received approximately \$336,545 in EDD funds.

Additionally, while Russo was on pretrial release so that she could participate in a residential drug treatment program, Russo left the program without permission and failed to appear in court on Jan. 8, 2024, as ordered. She was captured by the U.S. Marshals Service on June 11, 2024.

Dunsmore previously pleaded guilty on Feb. 26, 2024, to two counts of fraudulent use of unauthorized access device and two counts of aggravated identity theft. Judge Donato sentenced Dunsmore on June 17, 2024, to 24 months and one day in federal prison and ordered him to pay \$336,545 in restitution.

In addition to the term of imprisonment, Judge Donato also ordered Russo to pay \$336,545 in restitution, jointly and severally with Dunsmore.

Acting United States Attorney Patrick D. Robbins, Quentin Heiden, Special Agent-in-Charge, Western Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General (DOL-OIG), FBI Special Agent in Charge Sanjay Virmani, and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Inspector General Joseph V. Cuffari, Ph.D., made the announcement.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Wendy Garbers is prosecuting the case with the assistance of Laurie Worthen. The prosecution is the result of an investigation by DOL-OIG, FBI, DHS-OIG, and California's Employment Development Department.

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