

**Department of Justice**

U.S. Attorney's Office  
Southern District of Texas

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Texan sentenced in CARES Act unemployment fraud scheme**

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas - A 29-year-old Corpus Christi man has been ordered to federal prison after he admitted to devising a scheme to fraudulently misappropriate \$255,052 in unemployment benefits meant for those suffering financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic, announced Acting U.S. Attorney Jennifer B. Lowery.

William Cleveland Peck pleaded guilty Oct. 22, 2020.

Today, U.S. District Judge David S. Morales ordered him to serve a 41-month sentence to be immediately followed by three years of supervised release.

As part of his guilty plea, Peck admitted to misappropriating personally identifiable information, such as Social Security numbers and dates of birth, related to various individuals. Peck then used that information to file multiple false and fraudulent claims for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) and general unemployment benefits between May and July 2020.

Peck admitted to committing mail fraud by using misappropriated identities to file false and fraudulent claims with the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), causing TWC to mail debit cards to a P.O. Box Peck utilized. Peck then used the fraudulently-obtained debit cards to withdraw cash and make purchases. The individuals under whose identities Peck filed the false claims were not residents of Texas, not eligible for benefits through TWC and did not authorize Peck to file such claims.

PUA benefits were made available through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act - a federal law enacted March 29, 2020, which provides emergency financial assistance to millions of Americans who are suffering the economic effects resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Previously released on bond, Peck was permitted to remain on bond and voluntarily surrender to a U.S. Bureau of Prisons facility to be determined in the near future.

The Department of Labor - Office of the Inspector General, U.S. Postal Inspection Service and TWC conducted the investigation. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Andrew Swartz and Asha Natarajan are prosecuting the case.

**Topic(s):**  
Coronavirus

**Component(s):**  
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