

PRESS RELEASE

U.S. Postal Service Employee Sentenced to Prison for Stealing Nearly \$90,000 Worth of Postal Money Orders and Wire Fraud

Tuesday, June 11, 2024

For Immediate Release

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

Defendant also obtained over \$15,000 in unemployment benefits despite being fully employed

BOSTON – A U.S. Postal Service (USPS) employee was sentenced today for embezzling nearly \$90,000 and for fraudulently obtaining unemployment benefits.

Jamesa Rankins, 27, of Brockton, was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge Richard G. Stearns to 18 months in prison to be followed by three years of supervised release. Rankins was also ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$104,698. In November 2023, Rankins was convicted by a federal jury of one count of theft of government money and three counts of wire fraud.

Rankins worked as a Sales & Service Distribution Associate at the Montello Post office in Brockton for approximately four and a half years. Prior to her termination in January 2021, Rankins had the ability to generate postal money orders, including replacement money orders. Customers could obtain replacement money orders without paying any additional fees if the original postal money orders were lost, damaged or erroneous. Beginning around September 2020, Rankins issued approximately 126 fictitious replacement money orders to an associate for money orders that were not lost, damaged or erroneous. In many instances, the fictitious replacement money orders actually invalidated properly issued money orders. In total, Rankins issued nearly \$90,000 worth of replacement money orders.

Beginning in May 2020, Rankins also applied for and obtained Pandemic Unemployment Assistance from the Massachusetts Division of Unemployment Assistance despite being employed by USPS and thus being ineligible to receive unemployment assistance. In total, Rankins collected at least \$15,000 in unemployment benefits to which she was not entitled.

Acting United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy; Matthew Modafferi, Special Agent in Charge of the United States Postal Service Office of Inspector General, Northeast Area Field Office; and Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent-in-Charge, Northeast Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorney Eugenia M. Carris, Deputy Chief of the Public Corruption & Special Prosecutions Unit and Assistant U.S. Attorney Evan Panich of the Criminal Division prosecuted the case.

On May 17, 2021, the Attorney General established the COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Task Force to marshal the resources of the Department of Justice in partnership with agencies across government to enhance efforts to combat and prevent pandemic-related fraud. The Task Force bolsters efforts to investigate and prosecute the most culpable domestic and international criminal actors and assists agencies tasked with administering relief programs to prevent fraud by, among other methods, augmenting and incorporating existing coordination mechanisms, identifying resources and techniques to uncover fraudulent actors and their schemes, and sharing and harnessing information and insights gained from prior enforcement efforts. For more information on the Department's response to the pandemic, please visit <https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus>.

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>.

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