

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

District of Nevada

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, August 10, 2021

California Woman Pleads Guilty To Unemployment Benefits Fraud

LAS VEGAS, Nev. – A Santa Clarita woman pleaded guilty today to her role in a conspiracy to use other peoples' personal information – without their consent – to unlawfully apply for and obtain over \$250,000 in unemployment insurance benefits from the California Employment Development Department (EDD).

According to court documents and admissions made in court, around May of 2020, Brittany Danielle Griesel, 38, and her co-conspirators submitted fraudulent unemployment insurance claims with the EDD using other people's personal identifying information. In total, EDD approved more than \$250,000 in benefits for these fraudulent claims, which Griesel and her co-conspirators spent on goods and services. During a traffic stop in Las Vegas on August 8, 2020, law enforcement discovered Griesel was in possession of \$45,464 in fraudulent proceeds obtained as part of the conspiracy.

Griesel pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to effect illegal transactions with access devices and one count of aggravated identity theft. U.S. District Judge Richard F Boulware II scheduled sentencing for November 9, 2021. Griesel faces a statutory maximum penalty of nine and a half years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

Acting U.S. Attorney Christopher Chiou for the District of Nevada and Special Agent in Charge Quentin Heiden of the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General (DOL-OIG), Los Angeles region made the announcement.

This case was investigated by the DOL-OIG. Assistant U.S. Attorney Jim Fang is prosecuting the case.

In May, 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 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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Topic(s):
Coronavirus
Financial Fraud
Identity Theft

Component(s):
USAO - Nevada