PRESS RELEASE

Dubuque Man Sentenced to Federal Prison for COVID-19 Related Unemployment Fraud

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For Immediate Release
U.S. Attorney's Office, Northern District of Iowa

A man who stole government funds intended to aid unemployed workers during the COVID-19 pandemic was sentenced on October 28, 2026, to more than two years in federal prison. Jacob Michael Laufenberg, age 36, from Dubuque, Iowa, received the prison term after a February 23, 2026, guilty plea to wire fraud.

Information from the guilty plea and sentencing hearings showed that in May 2020, Laufenberg applied for unemployment benefits in Iowa. He subsequently received unemployment benefits until April 2021. While he was receiving unemployment benefits, he concealed his employment with two employers and the fact that he was incarcerated in a county jail for nearly two months. Laufenberg's false statements about his employment and custody status caused him to receive unemployment funds to which he was not entitled.

Laufenberg was sentenced in Cedar Rapids by United States District Court Chief Judge C.J. Williams. Laufenberg was sentenced to 33 months' imprisonment. He was ordered to make $17,102 in restitution to Iowa Workforce Development. He must also serve a five-year term of supervised release after the prison term. There is no parole in the federal system.

Laufenberg is being held in the United States Marshal's custody until he can be transported to a federal prison.

On April 7, the Department of Justice announced the creation of the National Fraud Enforcement Division. The core mission of the Fraud Division is to zealously investigate and prosecute those who steal or fraudulently misuse taxpayer dollars. Department of Justice efforts to combat fraud support President Trump's Task Force to Eliminate Fraud,

a whole-of-government effort chaired by Vice President J.D. Vance to eliminate fraud, waste, and abuse within Federal benefit programs.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Kyndra Lundquist and investigated by the United States Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General.

Court file information at https://ecf.iand.uscourts.gov/cgi-bin/login.pl. The case file number is 25-CR-1040.

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