

PRESS RELEASE

Florida Man Facing Federal Charges For Covid-19 Unemployment Insurance Fraud In Maryland And California

Monday, June 3, 2024

For Immediate Release

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

Defendant is Alleged to have Defrauded Maryland and California State Unemployment Insurance Programs by Using Stolen Identities of Victims in Maryland, California, Florida, Illinois, Mississippi and Washington, D.C.

Baltimore, Maryland – A federal grand jury has returned an indictment charging David Godin, a/k/a “James St Patrick,” a/k/a “David Wetty,” a/k/a “Vic Pro” for wire fraud and aggravated identity theft, in connection with a scheme to defraud the Maryland Department of Labor (“MD-DOL”) and California Employment Development Department (“CA-EDD”) of unemployment insurance (“UI”) benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Earlier today, Godin was arrested by law enforcement in Florida and had his initial appearance in the U.S. District Court in Miami, Florida.

The indictment was announced by United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Erik L. Barron; Special Agent in Charge Troy W. Springer of the National Capital Region, U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Inspector General (“DOL-OIG”), and Special Agent in Charge Kareem A. Carter of the Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation, Washington, D.C. Field Office.

According to the indictment, beginning in June 2020, Godin created disposable email addresses and used them to file fraudulent UI claims with the MD-DOL and CA-EDD. The UI claims contained false and fraudulent information and contained the

personal identifiable information of identity theft victims from Maryland, California, Florida, Illinois, Mississippi and Washington, D.C.

If convicted, Godin faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in federal prison for each count of wire fraud and a consecutive term of 2 years' imprisonment for aggravated identity theft. Furthermore, if convicted, Godin must forfeit any property derived from the scheme to defraud to the United States.

Actual sentences for federal crimes are typically less than the maximum penalties. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after taking into account the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors. An indictment is not a finding of guilt. An individual charged by indictment is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty at some later criminal proceedings.

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This case is part of the District of Maryland COVID-19 Strike Force, a Strike Force that is one of five strike forces established throughout the United States by the U.S. Department of Justice to investigate and prosecute COVID-19 fraud, including fraud relating to the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security ("CARES") Act. The CARES Act was designed to provide emergency financial assistance to Americans suffering the economic effects caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The strike forces focus on large-scale, multi-state pandemic relief fraud perpetrated by criminal organizations and transnational actors. The strike forces are interagency law enforcement efforts, using prosecutor-led and data analyst-driven teams designed to identify and bring to justice those who stole pandemic relief funds.

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>.

United States Attorney Erek L. Barron commended the DOL-OIG, and IRS-CI for their work in the investigation. Mr. Barron thanked Assistant U.S. Attorney Bijon A. Mostoufi, who is prosecuting the federal case.

For more information on the Maryland U.S. Attorney's Office, its priorities, and resources available to help the community, please visit www.justice.gov/usao-md and <https://www.justice.gov/usao-md/community-outreach>.

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Contact

USAMD.Press@usdoj.gov

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