

Department of Justice
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Eastern District of California

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Former Stockton Man Sentenced to Over 6 Years in Prison for Unemployment Benefits Fraud and Identity Theft

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Robert Joseph Maher, 42, formerly of Stockton, was sentenced today by U.S. District Judge John A. Mendez to six years and three months in prison for mail fraud and aggravated identity theft, Acting U.S. Attorney Phillip A. Talbert announced.

According to court documents, between November 2010 and February 2018, Maher participated in a scheme to defraud the State of California Employment Development Department (EDD) by filing fraudulent claims for unemployment insurance benefits. In furtherance of this scheme, Maher and his co-defendant, Michael Herron II, also of Stockton, created fictitious companies and fictitious employees by using the real identities of persons with and without their knowledge. They then filed claims with EDD, falsely stating that the employees had been laid-off or fired. The unemployment benefits were deposited onto debit cards that were mailed to addresses controlled by Maher, Herron, or their associates.

In one instance, Maher and Herron electronically filed an unemployment insurance claim in the name of an identity-theft victim. Maher knew that the victim was a real person because the claim listed the victim's correct date of birth and social security number. The claim also listed Maher's address in Stockton as the claimant's address, which caused a bank to mail an EDD debit card in the victim's name to Maher's address. Maher and Herron then transferred the card's benefits to Maher's personal bank account. Maher and Herron also used the victim's name to register another fictitious business entity that was used in the fraud scheme. In all, Maher and Herron filed at least 72 fraudulent claims for unemployment insurance benefits, seeking a total of \$739,535, of which EDD paid out approximately \$609,335. Judge Mendez ordered Maher to pay restitution to EDD in the amount of \$609,335.

This case is the product of an investigation by the U.S. Department of Labor - Office of Inspector General, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the California Employment Development Department's Investigation Division. Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Robert J. Artuz is prosecuting the case.

On March 26, 2019, Herron pleaded guilty to similar counts of mail fraud and aggravated identity theft and, on June 25, 2019, was sentenced to six years and three months in prison.

Topic(s):
Financial Fraud

Component(s):
[USAO - California, Eastern](#)

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