

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Northern District of Texas

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Husband, Wife Sentenced in \$15 Million Embezzlement Scheme

A Red Oak, Texas couple has been sentenced to a combined 18+ years in federal prison for their roles in a \$15 million retirement plan embezzlement scheme, announced U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Texas Erin Nealy Cox.

Vantage Benefits Administrators co-owner Wendy Richie, 59, pleaded guilty in June to two counts of theft from an employee benefit plan and one count of aggravated identity theft. She was sentenced Thursday by U.S. District Judge Sam Lindsay to 132 months in federal prison and ordered to pay \$12.6 million in restitution.

Her husband, Vantage co-owner Jeffrey Richie, 55, pleaded guilty to two counts of aiding and abetting theft from an employee benefit plan. He was sentenced to 87 months and ordered to pay \$7.4 million in restitution.

“These defendants lined their pockets at the expense of hardworking Americans saving for retirement,” said U.S. Attorney Erin Nealy Cox. “The Northern District of Texas is committed to seeking justice on behalf of vulnerable retirees and workers setting money aside for their golden years and beyond. We are proud to hold the Richies accountable for this brazen misconduct.”

“An important mission of the Office of Inspector General is to investigate allegations of fraud related to Department of Labor. We will continue to work with EBSA and our law enforcement partners to safeguard retirement benefits intended for American workers,” stated Steven Grell, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Dallas Region for the U.S. Department of Labor – Office of Inspector General.

The Richie's company served as third party administrator for dozens of pension and retirement funds.

According to plea papers, Ms. Richie admitted to using fund beneficiaries' personal information to submit \$15.2 million in fraudulent distribution requests to Matrix Trust, the funds' custodian. Instead of depositing the money into beneficiaries' accounts, however, she transferred it into Vantage's operating account, then into personal bank accounts.

Even after a Vantage employee confronted Mr. Richie about Ms. Richie's conduct, Ms. Richie continued to embezzle money from the funds. At least \$6.2 million of the \$15.2 million Ms. Richie embezzled was taken with Mr. Richie's knowledge, he admitted.

In total, the pair admitted to submitting more than 90 unauthorized distribution requests from 13 pension plans and 7 retirement plans from 2014 and 2017.

The Department of Labor – Office of Inspector General, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Labor's Employee Benefits Security Administration, and the Texas State Auditor's Office conducted the investigation. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Nick Bunch and Christopher Stokes prosecuted the case.

Contact: Erin Dooley Public Affairs 214-659-8707 erin.dooley@usdoj.gov