

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, September 8, 2022

Illinois Man Sentenced to 55 Months in Prison

For Wire Fraud

HAMMOND – Martae Patton, 36, of Chicago, Illinois, was sentenced by United States District Court Judge Philip P. Simon. on his plea of guilty to engaging in wire fraud announced United States Attorney Clifford D. Johnson.

Patton was sentenced to 55 months in prison followed by 2 years of supervised release. He was further ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$936,208.34

According to documents filed in the case, Patton engaged in a scheme to defraud the federal government and several state governments of Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) monies through false and fraudulent pretenses. PUA, a federal program overseen by the U.S. Department of Labor, is designed to assist individuals whose employment was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic by augmenting existing State unemployment benefits.

Patton was part of a scheme where the objective was to use personal information of unsuspecting persons to apply for unemployment benefits in Arizona, Pennsylvania, and Illinois. The fraudulently obtained benefits were then sent on a debit card to addresses associated with Patton and others located in and around the Northern District of Indiana. Patton and others then retrieved the debit cards and drained the funds through the purchases of money orders, ATM withdrawals and other means.

United States Attorney Clifford D. Johnson said, “This prosecution shows that my Office will aggressively prosecute persons who, by means of fraud, obtain federal funds that Congress appropriated to assist unemployed persons through the economic hardship created by the COVID pandemic. Such theft of federal funds tears the safety net that Congress implemented for American workers and their families.”

“This was a crime of greed and opportunity. The pandemic has created a great need for many who not only lost their livelihood, but in many cases their normalcy. This need unfortunately has been exploited by an individual who sought to steal and bilk the government for funds to which they were not entitled, interfering with the rightful distribution of pandemic relief. Postal Inspectors and their law enforcement partners will never tolerate this behavior and will tirelessly work to investigate and bring these individuals to justice for their illegal activity,” said Rodney M. Hopkins, U.S. Postal Inspector in Charge, Detroit Division of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

“Martae Patton participated in a scheme that defrauded several states and the federal government by filing fraudulent unemployment insurance (UI) claims using PII of unsuspecting individuals, resulting in the payment of nearly \$1 million in fraudulent UI benefits. Patton’s scheme diverted money away from American workers in need of relief from the financial effects of unemployment. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to safeguard the UI system from those who exploit these benefit programs,” said Irene Lindow, Special Agent-in-Charge, Chicago Region, U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General.

This case was investigated by the United States Postal Inspection Service and the United States Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Thomas McGrath.

Topic(s):

Coronavirus
Financial Fraud

Component(s):

USAO - Indiana, Northern