

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Eastern District of Michigan

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Identity Theft Ring Convicted for Unemployment Fraud and Conspiracy

Three individuals were convicted following a five-day jury trial in Ann Arbor on charges relating to identity theft, Acting United States Attorney Daniel L. Lemisch announced today.

Lemisch was joined in the announcement by Special Agent in Charge James Vanderberg, Department of Labor - Office of Inspector General, and Steve Arwood, Director, Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency.

Convicted were Kenneth Dixon, Nakita Washington, and Jamela Washington, all from Warren, Michigan. The defendants were charged with use of counterfeit access devices, aggravated identity theft, theft of government money, and conspiracy to commit those offenses.

Evidence presented at trial established that between October 2009 through April 2012, the defendants systematically engaged in a conspiracy to obtain the personal identification information of unsuspecting victims, and then used that information to submit fraudulent on-line claims for unemployment compensation benefits. Over 100 individuals were victimized.

“The guilty verdicts of Kenneth Dixon, Jamela Washington, and Nakita Washington are the culmination of an extensive investigation into a conspiracy that victimized individuals by stealing their identities and defrauded the Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency of over \$400,000”, stated James Vanderberg, Special Agent in Charge, Chicago Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General. “We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to safeguard the Unemployment Insurance Program.”

Sentencing for all three has been set for September 19, 2017. Each face a statutory maximum penalty of ten years in federal prison.

The case was investigated by special agents of the Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General with the assistance of the State of Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney C. Barrington Wilkins