

**PRESS RELEASE**

# **Las Vegas Man Sentenced To Over Three Years In Prison For Unemployment Insurance Benefits Fraud And Identity Theft**

Friday, March 28, 2025

**For Immediate Release**

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

**LAS VEGAS** – A Las Vegas resident was sentenced Thursday by United States District Judge Cristina D. Silva to three and a half years in prison to be followed by three years of supervised release for his role in a scheme to defraud at least \$385,000 in unemployment benefits from the California Employment Development Department (EDD) and identity theft.

According to court documents, from August 15, 2020, and continuing to September 18, 2020, Emelio Vladimir Rochester (28) and co-defendant Joseph Holmes Jr. conspired to obtain and possess 17 EDD debit cards issued in the names of victims without their authorization. To execute the scheme, Rochester and Holmes stole personal identifying information belonging to victims and filed fraudulent unemployment insurance claims. They then used the debit cards loaded with unemployment benefit funds to make ATM withdrawals in Santa Ana, Fountain Valley, and Garden Grove, California.

On September 18, 2020, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department officers conducted a traffic stop of a vehicle driven by Rochester with Holmes as a passenger. A search recovered 17 EDD debit cards, \$89,710 in cash, five cell phones, three laptop computers, and a tablet. All of the debit cards recovered were issued in different names. At least \$385,000 in unemployment benefits were approved for the claims associated with the debit cards, and at least \$192,234.29 was withdrawn from the accounts.

“Emelio Rochester filed fraudulent unemployment insurance (UI) claims in the names of identity theft victims to receive hundreds of thousands of dollars in UI benefits to which he was not entitled. He enriched himself at the expense of a program intended to assist American workers struggling during an unprecedented pandemic,” said Quentin Heiden,

Special Agent-in-Charge, Western Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General (DOL-OIG). "This sentencing underscores the commitment of the DOL-OIG and our law enforcement partners to root out waste, fraud, and abuse in DOL programs."

Rochester pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to possess counterfeit and unauthorized access devices and one count of aggravated identity theft. In addition to imprisonment, he was ordered to pay \$192,234 in restitution.

Co-defendant Holmes Jr. pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to possess counterfeit and unauthorized access devices and one count of aggravated identity theft. He was sentenced to 54 months in prison.

Acting United States Attorney Sue Fahami for the District of Nevada and Special Agent in Charge Heiden made the announcement.

The DOL-OIG investigated the case. Assistant United States Attorney Kimberly Frayn prosecuted the case.

Suspected fraud or violations relating to any DOL program should be promptly referred to the OIG via the OIG Hotline [online Complaint Form](#) or 1-800-347-3756.

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*Updated March 28, 2025*

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