

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

District of Nevada

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, April 29, 2021

Las Vegas Woman Sentenced For Unemployment Benefits Scheme

LAS VEGAS, Nev. – A Las Vegas woman was sentenced today to 12 months and a day in federal prison for fraudulently applying for and receiving nearly \$23,000 in unemployment benefits debit cards, announced Acting U.S. Attorney Christopher Chiou for the District of Nevada and Special Agent in Charge Quentin Heiden of the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General (DOL-OIG), Los Angeles Region.

According to court documents, Deandra Michelle Smith, 36, used another person's personal identification information — without that person's consent — and fraudulently applied for unemployment insurance benefits with the Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation (DETR). Around February 2017, Smith falsely claimed that the victim had been laid off, when in fact the victim was employed. Smith also listed her own address on the benefits application, so she would receive the benefits debit card issued by DETR. In carrying out her fraudulent scheme, Smith used the same victim's personal information to renew the unemployment claim several times. Between March 2017 and August 2018, Smith used the DETR-issued unemployment benefits debit cards in multiple states, including Nevada, California, Texas, and Hawaii. In total, Smith fraudulently received \$22,490 from DETR.

Smith pleaded guilty in November 2020 to one count of mail fraud. In addition to the term of imprisonment, U.S. District Judge Andrew P. Gordon sentenced Smith to three years of supervised release.

This case was investigated by DOL-OIG. Assistant U.S. Attorney Jim Fang prosecuted the case.

Anyone with information about allegations of attempted fraud involving COVID-19 can report it by calling the Department of Justice's National Center for Disaster Fraud Hotline at 866-720-5721 or via the NCDF Web Complaint Form at: <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form>.

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