

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, January 21, 2021

Le Mars Man Sentenced to Federal Prison for COVID-19 Related Unemployment Fraud

Chinn falsely underreported his income to receive COVID-19 unemployment funds.

A Le Mars, Iowa man who stole government funds using a COVID-19 unemployment scheme was sentenced January 19, 2021, to 3 months in federal prison.

Dennis George Chinn, age 55, from Le Mars, Iowa, received the prison term after a September 25, 2020 guilty plea to theft of government funds.

In a plea agreement, Chinn admitted to falsely reporting his income, stating it was \$150 per week, so he could get an additional \$600 weekly payment, and to fraudulently obtaining unemployment benefits related to COVID-19 relief funds to which he was not entitled. In total, Chinn obtained over \$13,000 in COVID-19 pandemic CARES Act Iowa unemployment funds.

Chinn was sentenced in Sioux City by United States District Court Chief Judge Leonard T. Strand. Chinn was sentenced to 3 months' imprisonment. He was ordered to pay \$12,231.00 in restitution. He must also serve a 2-year term of supervised release after the prison term. There is no parole in the federal system.

Chinn is being held in the United States Marshal's custody until he can be transported to a federal prison.

The case was prosecuted by United States Attorney Ron Timmons and was investigated by the United States Department of Labor and the Office of Inspector General and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Rooting out COVID-19 fraud is a priority of the Department of Justice. On March 27, 2020, the President signed the CARES Act, which provides emergency assistance to individuals, families, and businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, including increased unemployment benefits.

These prosecutions are an example of the Department of Justice's strong commitment to combating fraud and criminal activity related to the COVID-19 pandemic. 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>.

Court file information at <https://ecf.iand.uscourts.gov/cgi-bin/login.pl>.

The case file number is 20-4082.

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