

PRESS RELEASE

# McComb Woman Found Guilty of Conspiracy and False Statements in Connection with Federal Unemployment Fraud

Thursday, March 2, 2023

## For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District of Mississippi

Jackson, Miss. – A federal jury convicted a McComb woman for one count of conspiring to commit wire fraud, one count of conspiring to commit theft of public money, one count of theft of public money, and one count of making a false statement to a federal agent.

U.S. Attorney Darren J. LaMarca of the Southern District of Mississippi and Mathew Broadhurst, Special Agent in Charge for the Southeast Region of the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General made the announcement.

According to court documents and evidence presented at trial, Laketia Andrews Crossley, 51, conspired with Sedrick Pittman, Marcus Parker, Austin Bahm, and Calveshar Isaac to receive federal unemployment insurance benefits. During the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, Pittman, Parker, Bahm, and Isaac were inmates housed at the South Mississippi Correctional Institution in Mississippi Department of Corrections custody. The inmates fraudulently applied for federal unemployment insurance benefits by stating on their applications that they were able and available to immediately accept employment.

Due to the overwhelming number of applications for unemployment insurance, these fraudulent applications were not immediately detected, and benefits were approved for the group of prison inmates. The unemployment insurance benefits were sent by mail on debit cards to Crossley. Crossley then converted the funds on the debit cards to funds that she transmitted to Pittman, with whom she had a long-term romantic relationship, via cell phone. When questioned about her actions by special agents of the Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General (DOL-OIG), Crossley made false

statements. It is contrary to federal law to fraudulently apply for or receive federal unemployment insurance benefits. It is also contrary to federal law to make false statements to a federal agent.

While Pittman, Parker, Bahm, and Isaac all pled guilty to various charges, Crossley asserted her right to a jury trial. After a three-day trial at the federal courthouse in Natchez, a jury found Crossley guilty of all charges.

Crossley is scheduled to be sentenced by Senior United States District Judge David Bramlette III on June 1, 2023, at the federal courthouse in Natchez.

The Department of Labor Office of Inspector General investigated the case.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Kimberly T. Purdie and Charles W. Kirkham are prosecuting the case.

*Updated March 2, 2023*

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