U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

PRESS RELEASE

DOL OIG's Fraud Crackdown Continues with Prison Sentences, Restitution Orders, and Aggressive Enforcement Actions

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General

WASHINGTON — This week, the trend of swift and relentless accountability remains uninterrupted as three additional fraudsters were sentenced for their crimes. At the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Inspector General, the war on fraud is intensifying. Protecting taxpayer dollars through aggressive enforcement remains our top priority. We are committed to rooting out fraud, recovering stolen dollars, and ensuring criminals are off the streets and brought to justice. Inspector General D'Esposito, alongside our dedicated auditors and investigators, is following every lead and using every resource possible to combat fraud. In partnership with Vice President Vance's White House Fraud Task Force, the era of rampant theft is over; accountability is here.

PROVIDENCE — A North Carolina man, Irvin Vilneus, was sentenced to five years in federal prison, followed by three years of supervised release, for orchestrating a scheme to fraudulently obtain unemployment insurance. The court ordered payment of $2,812,716 in restitution; forfeiture of assets seized from Vilneus' residence, including $45,899 in cash and jewelry; and entry of a forfeiture money judgment of $2,812,716. Vilneus used stolen personal identifying information of over 150 people to fraudulently obtain unemployment benefits that were made available during the COVID-19 pandemic. Over eight months, Vilneus stole

approximately $2.8 million in government benefits. “Stealing the identities of innocent Americans and robbing them of pandemic benefits is more than a crime; it is a betrayal of the public trust. We will not allow criminals to enrich themselves at the expense of the American taxpayer. Every fraudster should expect investigations, prosecutions, and serious consequences. We are coming for you,” **said Anthony D’Esposito, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Labor.**

DETROIT — A former U.S. Postal Service employee, Christopher Powell, was sentenced to 20 months in prison followed by three years of supervised release and was ordered to pay restitution in the amount of $166,366 for fraudulently obtaining unemployment insurance (UI) benefits. From July 2020 to January 2024, Powell submitted fraudulent UI claims in multiple states using his own personal identifying information and made false certifications to obtain and maintain such benefits. After spending the stolen benefits associated with one false claim, Powell falsely reported to his bank that he never received the UI funds, prompting the bank to issue him even more money to which he was not entitled. Powell also admitted to directing mail related to at least one fraudulent claim to an address on his mail route. “Powell was employed to serve the American people, yet he chose to exploit government programs, stealing tens of thousands of dollars. We will hunt down anyone and everyone who threatens to undermine the integrity of our government programs and cheat the American taxpayer,” **said Inspector General D’Esposito.**

MASSACHUSETTS — A Massachusetts woman, Jasmine Murphy, was sentenced to time served (one day in prison) along with two years of supervised release and was ordered to pay restitution for COVID unemployment and loan fraud. Murphy, a former Suffolk County Corrections Officer, fraudulently applied for pandemic unemployment and small business loan benefits while working for a workforce services company, collecting over $37,500 in funds to which she was not entitled. In her pandemic unemployment assistance application, Murphy made fraudulent representations about her employment status, falsely claiming on a weekly basis that she neither worked nor received any income during the prior week. Murphy also submitted false statements to Small Business Administration-approved lenders, including details regarding the income and/or payroll of her purported small businesses, in order to obtain her loan. “Pandemic unemployment benefits were intended to provide a lifeline to workers who lost their jobs through no fault of their own, not an ATM for criminals,” **said Inspector General D’Esposito**. “As a corrections officer, Ms. Murphy was entrusted with upholding the law and serving the public. Instead, she abused that trust for personal gain and criminal conduct. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to hold accountable those who defraud unemployment insurance programs.”

For additional information on DOL OIG, please visit oig.dol.gov. If you suspect wrongdoing involving DOL programs or operations, contact the DOL OIG Hotline at (800) 347-3756 or visit oig.dol.gov/hotlinecontact.htm.

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