

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

District of New Jersey

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, February 9, 2023

**Passaic County Lawyer Charged with Fraud in Connection
with COVID-19 Relief Funds**

NEWARK, N.J. – A Passaic County, New Jersey, attorney was arrested today for fraudulent acts he committed in connection with COVID-19 relief funds, U.S. Attorney Philip R. Sellinger announced.

Morton Chirnomas, 60, of Clifton, New Jersey, is charged by complaint with one count of wire fraud. He is scheduled to appear before U.S. Magistrate Judge Leda Dunn Wettre in Newark federal court.

According to the complaint:

From May 2020 to September 2020 Chirnomas fraudulently obtained a \$150,000 loan through the COVID-19 Economic Injury Disaster Loans program. He also falsely obtained \$200,000 in unemployment insurance benefits using the names of other people.

The charge of wire fraud is punishable by a maximum potential penalty of 20 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000, twice the gross profits, or twice the gross loss suffered by the victims of the offense, whichever is greatest.

U.S. Attorney Sellinger credited postal inspectors with the U.S. Postal Inspection Service in Newark, under the direction of Inspector in Charge Christopher A. Nielsen, Philadelphia Division; special agents of the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, New York Region, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Jonathan Mellone; and special agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge James E. Dennehy in Newark, with the investigation leading to today's arrest.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Andrew Kogan of the U.S. Attorney's Office Cybercrime Unit in Newark.

The charges and allegations contained in the complaint are merely accusations and the defendant is considered innocent unless and until proven guilty.

Attachment(s):

[Download Chirnomas.Complaint.pdf](#)

Component(s):

[USAO - New Jersey](#)

Topic(s):

Coronavirus

Press Release Number:

23-035