

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Virginia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Southwest Virginia Man Sentenced to 108 Months for Role in Pandemic Unemployment Fraud Scheme

ABINGDON, Va. – A Pound, Virginia man, who conspired with others to fraudulently file more than \$499,000 in pandemic unemployment benefits, was sentenced today to 108 months in federal prison.

Gregory Marcus Tackett, 28, pleaded guilty in April 2021 to one count of conspiracy to defraud the government, one count of conspiracy to commit mail fraud, one count of aggravated identity theft, and one count of obstructing justice.

“During a time of national hardship brought on by the pandemic, the defendant conspired with others to defraud the government of funds intended to help Virginians that were truly in need,” Acting United States Attorney Bubar said today. “Today’s significant prison sentence demonstrates that such serious federal crime will not be tolerated. I am grateful for the determined efforts of the Department of Labor, IRS-CI, Norton Police Department and Russell County Sheriff’s Office for their hard work on this case.”

“Gregory Tackett conspired with others to commit fraud against the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program by filing for and receiving benefits that he and others were not entitled to receive. The U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General will continue to work closely with the U.S. Attorney’s Office, the Virginia Employment Commission, and our many law enforcement partners to safeguard the integrity of all unemployment assistance programs,” stated Syreeta Scott, Acting Special Agent-in-Charge of the Philadelphia Region, U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General.

“Tackett discovered how costly stealing pandemic unemployment benefits truly is today. We will continue to work with our investigative partners to hold accountable those who rob programs aimed at helping individuals struggling through this global crisis,” said Darrell J. Waldon, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the Washington D.C. Field Office

According to court documents, Tackett admitted to conspiring with others, including his girlfriend, LeeLynn Danielle Chytka, to commit fraud against the United States in connection with a scheme involving the filing of fraudulent claims for pandemic unemployment benefits.

Tackett, Chytka, and others, conspired to collect personal identification information of more than 35 co-conspirators, including 15 inmates in the custody of the Virginia Department of Corrections, and to file fraudulent claims of pandemic-related unemployment benefits.

Over the course of nine months, Tackett and Chytka filed fraudulent claims for at least 37 individuals, with a total actual loss to the United States of at least \$499,000.

The Department of Labor Office of the Inspector General, Internal Revenue Service – Criminal Investigation, Norton Police Department, and Russell County Sheriff’s Office investigated the case.

Assistant United States Attorney Daniel J. Murphy prosecuted the case.

On May 17, 2021, the Attorney General established the COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Task Force to marshal the resources of the Department of Justice in partnership with agencies across government to enhance efforts to combat and prevent pandemic-related fraud. The Task Force bolsters efforts to investigate and prosecute the most culpable domestic and international criminal actors and assists agencies tasked with administering relief programs to prevent fraud by, among other methods, augmenting and incorporating existing coordination mechanisms, identifying resources and techniques to uncover fraudulent actors and their schemes, and sharing and harnessing information and insights gained from prior enforcement efforts. For more information on the Department's response to the pandemic, please visit <https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus>.

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 (NCDF) 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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