

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, February 11, 2021

Westmoreland County Woman Pleads Guilty to Pandemic Unemployment Benefits Fraud

PITTSBURGH, PA- A resident of Arnold, Pennsylvania, pleaded guilty today to a charge of fraud, United States Attorney Scott W. Brady announced today.

Tracy Ann Stankiewicz, age 49, pleaded guilty to one count before Senior U.S. District Judge David S. Cercone.

In connection with the guilty plea, the Court was advised that from June 6, 2020 and continuing thereafter until July 12, 2020, Stankiewicz committed fraud in connection with emergency benefits.

On March 13, 2020, the President of the United States declared the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic to be an emergency under Section 501(b) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Act. Subsequently, on March 27, 2020, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) was signed into law. The CARES Act created the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) Program, which provided unemployment benefits to individuals not eligible for regular unemployment compensation or extended unemployment benefits. The CARES Act also provided an emergency increase in unemployment compensation benefits of \$600.00 per week.

According to information provided to the Court, on June 6, 2020, an application for PUA was electronically filed in the name of an inmate at State Correctional Institution-Greene. In the application, the filer (who was later determined to be Tracy Stankiewicz) represented that she was the inmate, and that the inmate was unemployed as a direct result of the pandemic, and that the inmate could accept a job if one were offered. Ms. Stankiewicz admitted to law enforcement authorities that she received approximately \$11,000.00 as a result of her crime.

Judge Cercone scheduled sentencing for June 10, 2021 at 11:30 a.m. The law provides for a maximum total sentence of not more than 30 years in prison, a fine of \$250,000 or both. Under the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, the actual sentence imposed would be based upon the seriousness of the offense and the prior criminal history, if any, of the defendant.

Assistant United States Attorney Brendan J. McKenna is prosecuting this case on behalf of the government.

The United States Secret Service and the Office of Inspector General – U.S. Department of Labor conducted the investigation leading to the Indictment in this case.

Topic(s):
Coronavirus
Financial Fraud

Component(s):
[USAO - Pennsylvania, Western](#)