

THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
SOUTHERN DISTRICT *of* GEORGIA

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Department of Justice

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Southern District of Georgia

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Two sentenced to federal prison in separate cases for fraudulently obtaining COVID-19 relief funding

More than 40 so far in Southern District prosecuted for pandemic schemes

SAVANNAH, GA: A former soldier paid for submitting false information to obtain COVID-19 relief funding and a Camden County woman who received funding after providing fake documents have been sentenced to federal prison.

Jerrold Bellamy, 26, of Savannah, was sentenced to 22 months in prison and ordered to pay \$223,807.14 in restitution after previously pleading guilty to Conspiracy and Filing a False Tax Return, said David H. Estes, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Georgia. Bellamy admitted he provided false information in his personal tax return, fraudulently obtained a Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan, and conspired with others to fraudulently obtain PPP loans for them. He also received more than \$50,000 in kickbacks for helping co-conspirators fraudulently obtain COVID-19 relief funding. At the time of his offenses, Bellamy was a Specialist in the U.S. Army and stationed at Hunter Army Airfield. He since has been discharged.

In a separate case, Roshawnda Richardson, 29, of Waverly, Ga., was sentenced to 15 months in prison and ordered to pay \$166,665.50 in restitution after previously pleading guilty to Wire Fraud. Richardson admitted participating in a scheme to fraudulently obtain PPP funding for two businesses.

U.S. District Court Judge Lisa Godbey Wood ordered Bellamy and Richardson to each serve three years of supervised release after completion of their prison terms, and there is no parole in the federal system.

"These sentences, with restitution representing the scope of these defendant's thefts from the American people, serve as a warning to other scam artists who used fraud to received small-business relief funding," said U.S. Attorney Estes. "With our law enforcement partners, we will continue to hold accountable those who have siphoned off funds from this assistance program."

Since passage of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, in March 2020, and its subsequent funding of more than \$6.5 billion, the Southern District of Georgia U.S. Attorney's Office has federally prosecuted more than 40 defendants for fraudulently obtaining PPP funding or Economic Injury Disaster Loans through Small Business Administration.

“These sentences show that individuals will be prosecuted when they break the law,” said Special Agent-in-Charge Scott Moreland, Army Criminal Investigation Division Major Procurement Fraud Field Office. “It should send a message to those who are tempted to defraud the government that CID and its federal law enforcement partners are committed to rooting out fraud.”

“Schemers who stole taxpayer dollars from SBA’s Paycheck Protection Program will be brought to justice,” said SBA OIG’s Eastern Region Special Agent in Charge Amaleka McCall-Brathwaite. “These sentences demonstrate that those responsible will be held accountable. I want to thank the U.S. Attorney’s office and our law enforcement partners for their support and dedication to pursuing justice in this case.”

“The sentencings are examples of what happens to those who think obtaining fraudulent PPP loans or getting kickbacks for helping others fraudulently obtain COVID-19 relief funding comes without consequences,” said James E. Dorsey, Special Agent in Charge, IRS Criminal Investigation, Atlanta Field Office. “The PPP loans and COVID-19 relief were lifelines for many struggling businesses during the pandemic, and those who steal from these programs will be found and prosecuted.”

“Those who choose to fraudulently utilize government assistance for their own personal gain undermine the efficacy and integrity of programs designed to support those who are in dire need of government relief,” stated Special Agent in Charge Darrin K. Jones, Department of Defense Office of Inspector General, Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS), Southeast Field Office. “DCIS and our investigative partners will continue to hold those accountable who exploit these programs for selfish gain.”

“The U.S. Secret Service’s collaboration with our law enforcement and prosecutorial partners continue to demonstrate our commitment to pursuing the bad actors who choose to exploit the systems created to help those effected by COVID-19 pandemic,” said Craig Reno, Resident Agent in Charge of the Savannah Resident Office. “The results of these cases will serve as a deterrent to fraudsters, and let them know they will be held accountable to the fullest extent of the law.”

The cases were investigated by the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Division, the Defense Criminal Investigative Service, the Small Business Administration Office of Inspector General, IRS Criminal Investigations, and the U.S. Secret Service, and prosecuted for the United States by the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of Georgia.

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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