

# **Cusick Man Sentenced to Federal Prison for Stealing more than \$155,000 Designated for Small Businesses During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Thursday, September 5, 2024

**For Immediate Release**

U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of Washington

Spokane, Washington – Vanessa R. Waldref, the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Washington, announced that Nathan Michael Triano, age 41, of Cusick, Washington, was sentenced on one count of Wire Fraud. United States District Judge Thomas O. Rice imposed a sentence of 18 months in federal prison to be followed by 3 years of supervised release and restitution in the amount of \$157,154.50.

On March 27, 2020, the President signed into law the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The CARES Act provided a number of programs through which eligible small businesses could request and obtain relief funding intended to mitigate the economic impacts of the pandemic for small and local businesses. One such program, the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), provided forgivable loans to eligible small businesses to retain jobs and maintain payroll during the pandemic.

According to court documents and information presented at the sentencing hearing, Triano obtained six PPP loans totaling \$140,865.00 by submitting materially false and fraudulent information concerning various purported businesses. In addition to the PPP funds dispersed to Triano, the United States also incurred a loss of \$15,000.00 in lender fees for the PPPs, resulting in a total actual and intended loss of at least \$155,865.00.

“Many small and local businesses had financial difficulties during the COVID-19 pandemic. PPP loans were designed to help businesses navigate that uncertain time and keep people employed. Mr. Tirano’s actions caused limited funds to be diverted away from companies that needed the money, and instead went to line his own pockets, stated U.S. Attorney Waldref. “I am grateful for the good work of all our partners on the COVID-19 Fraud Strike Force who continue to hold pandemic fraudsters accountable.”

“Pandemic relief funds were a critical lifeline for countless small businesses struggling to stay afloat during the COVID-19 crisis,” said Weston King, SBA OIG Special Agent in Charge for the Western Region. “This sentencing underscores the serious consequences of diverting resources away from businesses that genuinely needed them. We are grateful for the collaboration with the U.S. Attorney’s Office and our law enforcement partners in bringing justice to those who abuse these essential programs.”

“The Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration will continue to aggressively pursue anyone who creates fraudulent schemes or who fraudulently gets money from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act and its Paycheck Protection Program,” said Special Agent in Charge Rod Ammari. “We’re grateful to our law enforcement partners and the United States Attorney’s Office in making sure these crimes are prosecuted.”

The case was investigated by the Eastern District of Washington COVID-19 Fraud Strike Force and by SBA-OIG, TIGTA, DOL-OIG, DHS-HSI and DHS-OIG. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Frieda K. Zimmerman and Jeremy J. Kelley.

## **Contact**

Robert Curry

Public Affairs Specialist

USAWAE.Media@usdoj.gov

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