

Portland Man Sentenced to Federal Prison for Stealing Pandemic Unemployment Benefits

Thursday, October 17, 2024

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Oregon

PORTLAND, Ore.—A Portland man was sentenced to federal prison Wednesday for stealing more than \$147,000 in pandemic unemployment benefits from the Oregon Employment Department (OED).

Matthew Kemp, 41, was sentenced to six months in federal prison and three years' supervised release. Kemp was also ordered to pay \$147,294 in restitution to the OED.

According to court documents, between July 2020 and January 2021, Kemp devised and carried out a scheme whereby he used the personal information of 17 people, including their dates of birth and social security numbers, to fraudulently apply for pandemic unemployment insurance benefits. Some individuals knew Kemp had used their personal information because he had promised to obtain benefits on their behalf while others were unaware.

To ensure the benefits went to him instead of the named applicants, Kemp requested the benefits be paid out by check or prepaid debit card, and put his own mailing address, email address, and phone number on the claims. If there was a delay or issue in processing his various fraudulent claims, Kemp called the OED and impersonated the named applicant to ensure he got (in his words) "my money."

On February 7, 2024, a federal grand jury in Portland returned a seven-count indictment charging Kemp with mail fraud, bank fraud, and theft of government funds. On June 14, 2024, Kemp pleaded guilty to theft of government funds.

This case was investigated by the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General (DOL-OIG) and U.S. Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General (DHS-OIG). It was prosecuted by Meredith D.M. Bateman, Assistant U.S. Attorney for the District of Oregon.

Anyone with information about allegations of attempted fraud involving COVID-19 can report it by calling the Justice Department'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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