

# **U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of Washington Highlights Key 2024 Prosecutions of COVID-19 Financial Fraud**

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**For Immediate Release**

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

Spokane, Washington - U.S. Attorney Vanessa R. Waldref highlighted several prosecutions involving pandemic relief fraud during 2024 that were brought by the District’s COVID-19 Fraud Strike Force. U.S. Attorney Waldref has prioritized fighting fraud and public corruption, and her White Collar Section’s work combatting financial fraud and recovering damages continued to set the standard for medium-sized U.S. Attorney Offices.

A hallmark of this work is the Eastern Washington COVID-19 Fraud Strike Force, which was launched in February 2022 by U.S. Attorney Waldref and White Collar Chief Dan Fruchter, along with members of the U.S. Attorney’s Office (USAO) and federal law enforcement agencies. The Strike Force leverages partnerships between over a dozen agencies to aggressively investigate and prosecute fraud against pandemic relief programs in Eastern Washington. The Strike Force has prosecuted cases involving fraud in the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) program, Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program, and other pandemic relief programs, holding fraudsters accountable and recovering millions of dollars for taxpayers.

“Many struggling, deserving small businesses requested money from COVID-19 relief programs. Fraudsters saw these programs as an opportunity to enrich themselves, and when funds ran out, eligible businesses were denied critical funding to keep their doors open,” said U.S. Attorney Waldref. “In 2024, the Strike Force continued to hold fraudsters accountable, recovering millions of dollars in settlements, seizures, and restitution judgments. By combatting pandemic-related fraud, we protect local and small businesses that play by the rules, provide critical services for our community, and support our economy.”

Since the launch of the Strike Force in 2022:

37 defendants charged by indictment, information, or complaint

22 defendants have been convicted of felony fraud in connection with receipt of CARES Act funding

6 False Claims Act civil settlements

Millions of dollars in forfeited assets, including cash, real property, cryptocurrency, and vehicles

More than \$20 Million in restitution ordered

“The Eastern Washington COVID Fraud Strike Force represents the highest ideals of law enforcement and government – imagination, partnership, dedication, and service to the community. The Strike Force also involves many of the most skilled and hardworking law enforcement and other professionals, not just in Eastern Washington, but anywhere in the country,” said Assistant United States Attorney Dan Fruchter. “I’m proud and humbled to have had the opportunity to work with such a dedicated team of committed public servants on an effort that has brought accountability to an area badly in need of it, and look forward to continuing to work together to serve and protect the community.”

“The SBA-OIG remains steadfast in its commitment to rooting out fraud and holding wrongdoers accountable,” said Weston King, Special Agent in Charge of the SBA Office of Inspector General’s Western Region. “The defendants exploited programs designed to help small businesses survive unprecedented challenges, undermining the integrity of critical relief efforts. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to bring justice to those who seek to profit illegally at the expense of taxpayers.”

U.S. Attorney Waldref highlighted the following COVID-19 fraud cases prosecuted by her office in the past year:

[Tyler Keith Andrews](#) took part in a scheme to obtain more than \$16 million dollars in COVID-19 relief funds. Andrews assisted co-conspirators in obtaining at least \$13,449,179 in COVID-19 relief funding. Andrews obtained another \$4,485,541 by submitting false and fraudulent loan applications for his own companies. In December 2024, he was sentenced to more than 16 years in federal prison, 3 years of supervised release, restitution of \$16,330,814.30 to the Small Business Administration, and forfeiture of \$4,300,474.75.

In November 2024, [Taylor Jashaun Kendall and Michael Tyrig Allen](#), were charged with a dozen counts of fraud as part of a scheme to obtain \$300,000 COVID-19 relief funding for themselves and others.

[Antonio Crawford](#) submitted false applications in his name, and on behalf of others, in order to obtain more than \$750,000 in COVID-19 relief funding. In November 2024, he was sentenced to 45 months in prison, 5 years of supervised release, restitution of \$203,347.08, and forfeiture of \$173,329.00 in cash seized during a search of Crawford’s home, and \$13,642.00 in cash Crawford provided in lieu of forfeiture of his vehicle.

[BNL Technical Services, LLC \(BNL\)](#), which provided contract labor services to Hanford Site prime contractors, pleaded guilty in October 2024, to fraudulently obtaining \$493,865 as part of a scheme to obtain COVID-19 relief funding. BNL's labor costs and payroll were paid by the Department of Energy throughout the pandemic. BNL's owner, Wilson Pershing Stevenson III, agreed to pay \$1,105,498 as part of a civil settlement in the case.

[William Philip Werschler, and his associated businesses](#), were charged with 23 counts of fraud in October 2024, for fraudulently obtaining and using approximately \$1.5 million dollars in COVID-19 relief funds to purchase luxury sports cars, buy real estate, and pay off personal debt.

[Nathan Michael Triano](#), obtained six COVID-19 relief loans totaling \$140,865.00 by submitting materially false and fraudulent information concerning various purported businesses. In September 2024, he was sentenced to 18 months in federal prison to be followed by 3 years of supervised release and restitution in the amount of \$157,154.50.

In August 2024, [Gilbert Orosco](#) was indicted for a scheme in which he allegedly conspired with co-conspirators to defraud the United States government and the governments of California, Nevada, and Arizona and obtain money from the states' COVID relief programs in the form of unemployment insurance proceeds.

[Marisa Beck](#) submitted false and fraudulent payroll, revenue, and other information associated with three purported businesses to obtain \$368,829 in COVID-19 relief funding. In August 2024, Ms. Beck was sentenced to a year in federal prison, followed by 3 years of supervised release, as well as restitution of \$402,020.32.

The Strike Force consists of agency representatives from the USAO, Small Business Administration (SBA) Office of Inspector General (OIG), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), U.S. Department of the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA), U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs OIG, General Services Administration OIG, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) OIG, Internal Revenue Service, Department of Energy OIG, Department of Labor (DOL), and others.

Assistant United States Attorneys Dan Fruchter, Brian M. Donovan, Tyler H. L. Tornabene, Frieda K. Zimmerman, and Jeremy J. Kelley are members of the COVID-19 Strike Force and prosecuted these cases on behalf of the United States.

*An indictment is merely an allegation, and all defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.*

## **Contact**

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