



THE UNITED STATES

Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, April 22, 2021

North Carolina Man Sentenced for COVID-19 Relief Fraud Schemes

A North Carolina man was sentenced today to 63 months in prison for perpetrating three fraud schemes between March and July 2020 connected to the COVID-19 pandemic, through which he defrauded consumers and the federal government's Economic Injury Disaster Loan program (EIDL), created to assist small business owners during the pandemic.

Brandon Lewis, 35, of Greensboro, pleaded guilty to two counts of wire fraud and one count of making a false statement to the Small Business Administration (SBA) on Aug. 31, 2020.

According to court documents, in March 2020, Lewis created a fake website for orders for pandemic-critical goods, defrauding consumers of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Lewis also created a fake "COVID-19 Relief Fund," which he used to defraud dozens of small business owners, and submitted approximately 68 fraudulent applications for loans and non-refundable grant "advances" of up to \$10,000 through the SBA-EIDL program.

Acting Assistant Attorney General Nicholas L. McQuaid of the Justice Department's Criminal Division; Acting U.S. Attorney Sandra J. Hairston of the Middle District of North Carolina; Acting Special Agent in Charge Mona Passmore of the IRS Criminal Investigation (IRS-CI); Inspector in Charge Tommy D. Coke of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) Atlanta Division; Special Agent in Charge Amaleka McCall-Brathwaite of the SBA Office of Inspector General's Eastern Region; and Inspector General J. Russell George of the U.S. Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) made the announcement.

This case was investigated by the USPIS, IRS-CI, SBA-OIG, and TIGTA. Trial Attorney David A. Stier, formerly of the Criminal Division's Fraud Section, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Meredith C. Ruggles prosecuted the case with valuable assistance from the Fraud Section's Victim Assistance Unit.

In light of the large volume of victims, the court set a deadline of July 21, 2021, for issuance of a final order of restitution. Victims may find additional information here: <https://www.justice.gov/criminal-vns/case/brandon-lewis>, and may contact the Victim Assistance Line toll-free at (888) 549-3945 or by email at VictimAssistance.fraud@usdoj.gov.

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