



THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE  
WESTERN DISTRICT *of* NORTH CAROLINA

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**Department of Justice**

U.S. Attorney's Office

Western District of North Carolina

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Charlotte Man Is Charged With Using Stolen Identities To Defraud Government-Funded Coronavirus Aid Relief Programs Of More Than \$200,000**

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – A criminal indictment was unsealed in federal court today, following Keon I. Taylor's initial appearance on federal charges for allegedly using stolen identities to defraud government-funded coronavirus aid relief programs of more than \$200,000, announced William T. Stetzer, Acting U.S. Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina.

Specifically, the criminal indictment charges Taylor, 30, of Charlotte, with eight counts of wire fraud, two counts of making a false statement to the U.S. Small Business Administration, three counts of aggravated identity theft, and one count related to possessing equipment that can be used to make fake identity documents.

Acting U.S. Attorney Stetzer is joined in making today's announcement by Tommy D. Coke, Inspector in Charge of the Atlanta Division of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) which oversees Charlotte.

According to allegations contained in the indictment, from at least March 2020 through February 2021, Taylor engaged in a scheme to defraud the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), the North Carolina Division of Employment Security, and the States of Tennessee, Texas, Ohio, Massachusetts, Nevada, and Arizona by filing fraudulent claims for COVID-19 related unemployment insurance (UI) benefits using stolen information of identity theft victims. The indictment alleges that, as part of the scheme, Taylor obtained over the internet and elsewhere multiple victims' stolen personal identifying information, or "PII," including victims' names, Social Security numbers, dates of birth, and addresses. Taylor used the stolen PII of more than 35 victims to apply for and receive over \$219,000 in fraudulent unemployment benefits, and to submit numerous additional applications seeking fraudulent UI benefits. The indictment further alleges that Taylor also used false information to fraudulently apply for three Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL) under the expanded CARES Act.

The CARES Act is a federal law enacted March 29, 2020, and it is designed to provide emergency financial assistance to millions of Americans suffering the economic effects caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The CARES Act established several new temporary programs and provided for the expansion of others, including the EIDL program, which is an SBA program that provides low-interest financing to small businesses, renters, and homeowners in regions affected by declared disasters.

U.S. District Judge David C. Keesler presided over Taylor's initial appearance in magistrate court in Charlotte this morning.

The wire fraud charges carry a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine per count, with additional penalties possible because the offenses relate to a presidentially declared emergency. The false statements to the SBA charges carry a maximum prison sentence of 30 years and a \$1 million fine per count. The aggravated identity theft charges carry a minimum prison term of two years, consecutive to any other prison term imposed, per count. The charge of production, transfer, or possession of a document making implement or authentication feature carries a term of imprisonment of up to 15 years and a \$250,000 fine.

The charges against Taylor are allegations and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond reasonable doubt in a court of law.

In making today's announcement, Acting U.S. Attorney Stetzer thanked the U.S. Postal Inspection Service for their investigative efforts which led to the charges. The prosecution for the government is handled by Assistant United States Attorney Jenny G. Sugar of the U.S. Attorney's Office in Charlotte.

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On May 17, 2021, U.S. Attorney General Merrick B. Garland announced the establishment of a the COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Task Force to combat fraud related to the coronavirus epidemic. The Task Force will marshal the resources of the Department of Justice in partnership with agencies across the government to enhance enforcement efforts against wrongdoers seeking to exploit COVID-19 pandemic.

"The Department of Justice will use every available tool – including criminal, civil, and administrative actions – to combat and prevent COVID-19 related fraud. We look forward to working with our federal government colleagues to bring to justice those who seek to profit unlawfully from the pandemic," wrote Attorney General Garland in a memo announcing the Task Force.

Organized and led by the Deputy Attorney General, the Task Force includes several entities within the Department of Justice, including the Criminal and Civil Division, the Executive Office for United States Attorneys, and the FBI. Key interagency partners, such as the Department of Labor, the Department of Treasury, the Department of Homeland Security, the SBA, the Special Inspector General for Pandemic Relief (SIGPR), the Pandemic Response Accountability Committee (PRAC), and others, have been invited to be part of the Task Force.

The Department of Justice and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of North Carolina need the public's assistance in remaining vigilant and reporting suspected fraudulent activity. To report suspected fraud, contact the National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) at (866) 720-5721 or file an online complaint at <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/webform/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form>. Complaints filed will be reviewed by the NCDF and referred to federal, state, local or international law enforcement or regulatory agencies for investigation. Members of the public in the Western District of North Carolina are also encouraged to call 704-344-6222 to reach their local Coronavirus Fraud Coordinator.

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