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MADIGAN, IDES CRACK DOWN ON UNEMPLOYMENT FRAUD

Attorney General Charges Five for Illegally Collecting \$159,000 in Unemployment Benefits

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan and the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) today announced indictments of five Chicago area defendants, alleging they defrauded the state when they collected more than \$159,000 in unemployment benefits even though they were employed.

The sweep was the result of investigations by IDES and the Attorney General's office that discovered the defendants were repeatedly certifying they were unemployed in order to collect weekly benefits in spite of already being employed.

"Unemployment insurance is meant to help people who truly need assistance as they search for work," Madigan said. "But week after week, sometimes for years at a time, these individuals claimed they were unemployed and needed financial assistance when in fact they were simultaneously collecting a paycheck at work."

"The indictments show our commitment to fighting waste, fraud and abuse goes deeper than words," IDES Director Jay Rowell said. "Gaming the system hurts workers, hurts employers and hurts our economy. Stealing money from those who play by the rules will not be tolerated."

Madigan filed charges of theft of government property, a Class 1 felony punishable by four to 15 years in prison, and state benefits fraud and wire fraud, Class 3 felonies punishable by two to five years in prison, against the five defendants.

In each case, the defendant falsely verified they were unemployed through the IDES phone or online verification system to access taxpayer-funded assistance during their supposed unemployment. Investigations by the department and Madigan's office revealed the defendants were, in fact, employed and should not have received benefits or the level of benefits they claimed.

Fraudulent claims made by the defendants spanned from 2009 through 2012. Prosecutors charged five defendants in Cook County, alleging:

- Barbara Gary, 53, of Chicago; collected more than \$26,000 in fraudulent benefits;
- Ron Gilmore, 50, of Chicago, collected more than \$28,000 in fraudulent benefits;
- Carl Huff, 44, of Chicago; collected more than \$49,000 in fraudulent benefits;
- James Jones, 48, of Chicago, collected more than \$23,000 in fraudulent benefits;
- Eunice Tinger, 36, of Calumet City; collected more than \$31,000 in fraudulent benefits.

The indictments followed an announcement in 2012 of a partnership between Madigan's office and IDES to provide two assistant attorneys general to investigate and prosecute unemployment benefits fraud. Madigan said these attorneys have provided critical support to the state's efforts to recoup taxpayer dollars obtained by fraud and criminal conduct.

Assistant Attorneys General Robin Murphy and John Walz are handling the cases for Madigan's Financial Crimes Prosecution Unit.

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