

HALL OF JUSTICE
330 WEST BROADWAY
SAN DIEGO, CA 92101
(619) 531-4040
SanDiegoDA.com

OFFICE OF
THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

DAVID P. GREENBERG
ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

SUMMER STEPHAN
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

March 30, 2021
For Immediate Release

Contact: [Steve Walker](#) (619) 531-3890
[Tanya Sierra](#) (619) 531-3315
En Español [Barbara Medina](#) (619) 531-3305

District Attorney Charges Three in \$1.3 Million Unemployment Benefits Fraud Scheme

Trio Filed Fraudulent Claims Using Personal Info of 64 Prison Inmates

District Attorney Summer Stephan announced criminal charges today against three defendants who filed fraudulent claims to scam the state's unemployment benefit system and received more than \$1.3 million in illegal payments. The fraud occurred between February and December of last year. The defendants applied for and received EDD Bank of America debit cards in other people's names. The trio used their three residential addresses in Escondido and five different P.O. Boxes located in Escondido, Carlsbad, and Vista to receive the EDD cards.

Working with investigators from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitations (CDCR) and Employment Development Department, District Attorney Investigators determined the defendants used the personal information of at least 64 prison inmates to fraudulently apply for and receive the unemployment benefits. California prison inmates are not eligible to receive EDD unemployment benefits. The Defendants had the fraudulent EDD benefits and Bank of America debit cards mailed directly to their homes or P.O. Boxes so the cash could easily be withdrawn. Over \$1.3 million in the EDD benefits were sent to the Defendant's addresses.

"These individuals gamed the system and added insult to injury for families relying on legitimate unemployment benefits to make ends meet during the ongoing pandemic," DA Summer Stephan said. "This is the second large-scale unemployment benefits fraud case my office has filed this year and we are continuing to work with CDCR and EDD to root out this type of fraud which could total as much as \$5 million in San Diego County."

The defendants are Ryan Kubista, 34; Maereichelle Marquez, 34; and Stacy Wright, 61. Charges include making false statement on an unemployment application, grand theft, acquiring access card account information, ID theft, forgery, and false personation. If convicted of all the charges, the defendants face a sentencing range of three to 12 years in prison.

Follow the District Attorney's Office on



“State unemployment systems are under attack by sophisticated international and domestic organized fraud schemes,” said Employment Development Department Investigation Division Chief David A. Montoya. “Strong cooperation among local, state and federal law enforcement partners helps stop these schemes and bring perpetrators to justice.

In January, DA Stephan announced charges against nine defendants who scammed the state’s unemployment benefit system and received more than \$160,000 in illegal payments. All of the inmates in that scheme were assigned to a program in San Diego that allows qualified state prison inmates to serve the final months of their sentences in a halfway house setting. Investigators were tipped off when inmates receiving luxury items from Amazon, as well as food deliveries from restaurants. Inmates had downloaded mobile banking applications on their cell phones which revealed they each had access to large amounts of money. None of the inmates were employed.

In December of 2020, DA Stephan joined eight other District attorneys on a joint letter to Governor Gavin Newsom, warning the problem of EDD fraud problem could "grow exponentially." Among their requests, the letter asked for legislation that would allow future cross-matching of data between correctional facilities and the Employment Development Department (EDD). Officials estimate jail and prison inmates have fraudulently collected unemployment benefits that appear to have cost California taxpayers at least \$400 million.

Marquez was arraigned today, and a preliminary hearing was set for May 10.

###

About the San Diego County District Attorney’s Office

The San Diego County DA’s Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue fair and equal justice, and support victims daily across San Diego County.