



News Release

Pat Quinn, Governor

Jay Rowell, Director

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Fraud Sentencing Emphasizes Prevention Efforts

Do Not Pay Someone to File a Benefit Claim

96 Months Affirmed; Woman Ordered to Repay \$724,596

CHICAGO - A federal appeals court has upheld the 96-month prison sentence imposed upon a Chicago woman who defrauded the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) of more than \$700,000.

Jay Rowell, the Director of IDES, said the ruling sends a strong message that the state takes seriously fraud prosecutions and there are significant consequences for individuals who cheat the program.

“Unemployment insurance is designed to help a worker bridge the gap between jobs and push the local economy through a tough economic climate,” Rowell said. “Stealing money from that fund hurts the individuals and businesses playing by the rules and, as a result, hurts our economy. We must protect taxpayer money and prosecute fraud cases to the fullest extent of the law.”

In 2010, a federal jury in Chicago determined Angelica Vasquez committed mail fraud. She charged individuals an \$80 fee to prepare an unemployment insurance application. She also collected the first two-week payment from each individual which, on average, was about \$600. The jury determined Vasquez falsely represented that the individuals were eligible for benefits. Often the claimants never signed nor saw the applications. Vasquez appealed the sentence on technical grounds and attempted to have it reduced. The Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals disagreed and affirmed the sentencing this month.

Vasquez also was ordered to repay the IDES \$724,596 in restitution. The IDES assisted the U.S. Attorney’s office in the investigation. The case also highlights that there is no need to pay someone to file an unemployment insurance claim.

“No one should feel it necessary to pay someone to file for unemployment insurance benefits. Should someone need help understanding the process, for whatever reason, we have free help ready and available,” Rowell said. “It is unconscionable that people would prey upon vulnerable individuals who seek a temporary helping hand that business and labor groups agree is critical to our economy.”

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