

RESS RELEASE

San Antonio Man Indicted for Defrauding Federal COVID-Era Programs

Monday, November 20, 2023

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For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Western District of Texas

SAN ANTONIO – A federal grand jury in San Antonio returned an indictment charging a San Antonio man with 11 counts related to wire fraud and money laundering.

According to court documents, James Michael Bergeron, 42, allegedly devised a scheme to secure funds made available through the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and the Restaurant Revitalization Fund (RRF), both of which were COVID-era programs designed to provide relief to small business owners. The indictment alleges Bergeron secured the funds by making misrepresentations about the number of employees employed, as well as the average monthly payroll paid out, by various entities he controlled. In securing the RRF money, it also reports that Bergeron made misrepresentations about the annual revenue for one of these entities. Based on these misrepresentations, Bergeron, allegedly through the various entities, received millions of dollars. He then spent the funds on various unauthorized items, including real estate, vehicles and retail investment products.

Bergeron is charged with five counts of wire fraud, one count of false statement, three counts of engaging in a monetary transaction over \$10,000 using criminally derived proceeds, and two counts of concealment money laundering. The defendant made his initial court appearance Monday before U.S. Magistrate Judge Elizabeth Chestney of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas. If convicted, he faces a maximum penalty of thirty years in prison. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

U.S. Attorney Jaime Esparza of the Western District of Texas made the announcement.

The Federal Housing Finance Agency Office of Inspector General and IRS Criminal Investigation are investigating the case.

Western District of Texas Assistant U.S. Attorneys Justin Simmons and Bill Harris and Trial Attorney Ariel Glasner from the U.S. Department of Justice Criminal Division, Fraud Section are prosecuting the case.

An indictment is merely an allegation and all defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

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