



Alabama Department of Labor

News Release

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Alabama Department of Labor Obtaining Convictions for Unemployment Compensation Fraud

MONTGOMERY – Alabama Department of Labor Commissioner Fitzgerald Washington announced today that the Department has successfully prosecuted several Alabamians for unemployment compensation fraud. The following individuals were charged with violating the Alabama Unemployment Compensation Law by making false statements in claims for benefits:

- Alexander McGaster, of Foley, was tried in Baldwin County Circuit Court on October 5, 2015. An investigation by Labor’s Benefit Payment Control Section determined that McGaster received a total of \$1,071 in benefits to which he was not entitled.

McGaster pled guilty and was sentenced to a one year in jail which was suspended for six months. He was also ordered to pay court costs and restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally.

- John Tarver, of Union Springs, was tried in Bullock County District Court on November 4, 2015. An investigation by Labor’s Benefit Payment Control Section determined that Tarver received a total of \$2,285 in benefits to which he was not entitled.

Tarver pled guilty and was sentenced to 30 days in jail, which was suspended, and two year of unsupervised probation. He was also fined \$200 and ordered to pay court costs and restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally.

- Christian Foster, of Wetumpka, was tried in Elmore County District Court on September 17, 2015. An investigation by Labor’s Benefit Payment Control Section determined that Foster received a total of \$9,554 in benefits to which he was not entitled.

Foster pled guilty and was sentenced to six months in jail, which was suspended, and two years of unsupervised probation. He was also fined \$100 and ordered to pay court costs and restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally.

- Anthony W. Washington, of Opelika, was tried in Lee County District Court on October 13, 2015. An investigation by Labor's Benefit Payment Control Section determined that Washington received a total of \$2,650 in benefits to which he was not entitled.

Washington pled guilty and was sentenced to 90 days in jail, which was suspended pending restitution. He was also ordered to pay court costs and restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally within one year.

- Jackie L. Carraway, of Montevallo, was tried in Shelby County Circuit Court on October 7, 2015. An investigation by Labor's Benefit Payment Control Section determined that Meadows received a total of \$4,544 in benefits to which she was not entitled.

Carraway pled guilty and was sentenced to one year in jail, which was suspended, and two years of unsupervised probation. She was also ordered to pay court costs and restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally.

The following individuals were charged with Theft of Property 1st Degree:

- John E. McGatha, Jr., of Anniston, was tried in Calhoun County Circuit Court on July 7, 2015. An investigation by Labor's Benefit Payment Control Section determined that McGatha received a total of \$14,558 in benefits to which he was not entitled.

McGatha pled guilty and was sentenced to 115 months in prison, and was given credit for 919 days served on a previous charge. He was fined \$250 and ordered to pay court costs and restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally.

- Joann Meadows, of Talladega, was tried in Talladega County Circuit Court on November 10, 2015. An investigation by Labor's Benefit Payment Control Section determined that Meadows received a total of \$8,398 in benefits to which she was not entitled.

Meadows pled guilty and was sentenced to 30 months in jail, which was suspended for two years pending full restitution. She was also fined \$750 and ordered to pay court costs and restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally.

- Alvin L. Smith, of Talladega, was tried in Talladega County Circuit Court on October 13, 2015. An investigation by Labor's Benefit Payment Control Section determined that Smith received a total of \$13,035 in benefits to which he was not entitled.

Smith pled guilty and was sentenced to 36 months in jail, which was suspended for two years pending full restitution. He was also fined \$500 and ordered to pay court costs and restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally.

The following individuals were charged with Theft of Property 2nd Degree:

- Kalus K. Johnson, of Talladega, was tried in Talladega County Circuit Court on October 13, 2015. An investigation by Labor's Benefit Payment Control Section determined that

Johnson received a total of \$4,203 in benefits to which he was not entitled.

Johnson pled not guilty, but was found guilty and was sentenced to 22 months in jail, which was suspended for two years pending full restitution. He was also fined \$500 and ordered to pay court costs and restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally.

The following individuals were charged with Theft of Property 3rd Degree:

- Patrice N. Harris, of Anniston, was tried in Calhoun County Circuit Court on April 1, 2015. An investigation by Labor's Benefit Payment Control Section determined that Harris received a total of \$7,750 in benefits to which she was not entitled.

Harris pled guilty and was sentenced to one year in jail, which was suspended, and two years of formal probation. She was fined \$150 and ordered to pay court costs and restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally.

- Brian Gray, Jr., of Mobile, was tried in Mobile County Circuit Court on October 14, 2015. An investigation by Labor's Benefit Payment Control Section determined that Gray received a total of \$1,275 in benefits to which he was not entitled.

Gray pled guilty and was sentenced to one year in jail, which was split for time served with the remainder suspended for two years pending restitution and two years of formal probation. He was also assessed a \$50 victim's fee and ordered to pay court costs and restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally.

- Nakeshia N. Jones, of Mobile, was tried in Mobile County Circuit Court on October 26, 2015. An investigation by Labor's Benefit Payment Control Section determined that Jones received a total of \$4,597 in benefits to which she was not entitled.

Jones pled guilty and was sentenced to one year in jail, which was split for time served with the remainder suspended for one year pending restitution, which she paid at court. She was placed on one year of formal probation. She was assessed a \$25 victim's fee, a \$175 bond fee, and ordered to pay court costs and restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally.

- Kendric O. McCaskill, of Mobile, was tried in Mobile County Circuit Court on November 19, 2015. An investigation by Labor's Benefit Payment Control Section determined that McCaskill received a total of \$5,045 in benefits to which he was not entitled.

McCaskill was allowed to plead guilty to a reduced charge of Theft of Property 3rd Degree due to previously repaying the total amount obtained fraudulently. He was given credit for time already served and was assessed a \$50 victim's fee, and ordered to pay court costs.

- Terrill O. Payton, of Mobile, was tried in Mobile County Circuit Court on October 19,

2015. An investigation by Labor's Benefit Payment Control Section determined that Payton received a total of \$6,170 in benefits to which he was not entitled.

Payton pled guilty and was sentenced to one year in jail, which was split for time served with the remainder suspended for two years pending restitution, and given two years of formal probation. He was assessed a \$50 victim's fee and ordered to pay court costs and restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally.

The following individuals were charged with a Class C felony:

- Shemira M. Pernell, of Millbrook, was tried in Elmore County District Court on July 30, 2015. An investigation by Labor's Benefit Payment Control Section determined that Pernell received a total of \$1,560 in benefits to which she was not entitled.

Pernell pled guilty and was sentenced to one year and one day in jail, which was suspended, and 18 months of unsupervised probation. She was also ordered to pay court costs and restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally.

- Dustin Sellers, of Troy, was tried in Pike County Circuit Court on June 25, 2015. An investigation by Labor's Benefit Payment Control Section determined that Sellers received a total of \$2,484 in benefits to which he was not entitled.

Sellers pled guilty and was sentenced to three years in jail, which was suspended, and given three years' probation. He was also ordered to pay court costs and restitution in the amount of benefits received illegally.

"Unemployment compensation benefits can serve as a lifeline to those who truly need them," said Washington. "However, we want to send a message to those who would knowingly defraud the system in order to obtain benefits they aren't entitled to: This is a crime and you will be prosecuted."

"Our investigators are continuously working with local District Attorney Offices in order to identify and prosecute those individuals who are committing these crimes. I would also like to remind employers that their timely reporting of new hires is one of the best tools we have to prevent unemployment fraud."

Suspected unemployment compensation fraud may be reported to the Alabama Department of Labor by calling 1-800-392-8019.

Employers may find more information regarding reporting new hires at <http://www.labor.alabama.gov/nh>.

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Members of the media seeking more information should contact Communications Director Tara Hutchison at (334) 242-8616.