



***United States Attorney
District of New Jersey***

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**FORMER POSTAL EMPLOYEE ADMITS FRAUD IN CONNECTION WITH
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFITS**

NEWARK, N.J. – A former U.S. Postal Service USPS employee today admitted that he conspired to fraudulently obtain unemployment insurance benefits, U.S. Attorney Philip R. Sellinger announced.

Ross Clayton, 31, of Irvington, New Jersey, pleaded guilty by videoconference before U.S. District Judge Julien X. Neals to an information charging him with conspiring to commit wire fraud.

According to documents filed in the case and statements made in court:

On March 27, 2020, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) was signed into law. The CARES Act created a new temporary federal unemployment insurance program called Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), which provided unemployment insurance benefits for individuals who were not eligible for other types of unemployment (the self-employed, independent contractors, gig economy workers). The CARES Act also created a new temporary federal program called Federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (FPUC) that provided an additional \$600 weekly benefit to those eligible for PUA and regular unemployment insurance benefits.

Clayton was a USPS employee. Clayton took unemployment insurance benefits-related mail, including debit cards, from a USPS location in New Jersey and used that mail to obtain unemployment insurance benefits to which he was not entitled.

The charge of conspiring to commit wire fraud is punishable by a maximum potential penalty of 20 years in prison and a fine of the greater of \$250,000, twice the gross profits to Stokes or twice the gross loss suffered by the victims. Sentencing is scheduled for Sept. 7, 2022.

U.S. Attorney Sellinger credited special agents of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Jonathan Mellone in Manhattan; and postal inspectors of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service in Newark, under the direction of Postal Inspector in Charge Damon Wood, Philadelphia Division, with the

investigation leading to today's guilty plea.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Andrew Kogan of the U.S. Attorney's Office Cybercrime Unit in Newark.

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Defense counsel: Robert M. Perry, Mount Holly, New Jersey