



U. S. Department of Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, March 22, 2023

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**PENSACOLA INSURANCE COMPANY OWNER SENTENCED TO
168 MONTHS IN PRISON FOR
WIRE FRAUD AND MONEY LAUNDERING OFFENSES**

PENSACOLA, FLORIDA – John Thomas, 52, of Pensacola was sentenced to 168 months in federal prison for wire fraud and money laundering charges related to selling fraudulent insurance policies. In addition to his prison sentence, he was ordered to pay \$8,340,153.34 in restitution. Jason R. Coody, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Florida announced the sentence.

“This sentence should serve as a significant deterrent to those who would defraud our citizens, in this case depriving them of critical insurance coverage, simply to unlawfully enrich themselves,” said U.S. Attorney Coody. “Our law enforcement partners are to be commended for their tireless dedication during this investigation and prosecution. Through their collective efforts, the defendant has been held accountable and justice has been obtained for his victims.”

Between September 2013 and February 2021, Thomas operated an insurance business known as Thomas Insurance, LLC. and defrauded customers over \$4.8 million in insurance premium payments through a type of insurance fraud known as premium diversion. Thomas executed this scheme by collecting insurance premiums from customers and keeping the funds for personal use instead of producing insurance policies. To conceal his acts, Thomas gave the customers fraudulent documents referencing insurance policies that did not exist.

“Today’s sentencing should serve as a warning to anyone who uses illegal means and criminal behavior to take advantage of others,” said Sherri E. Onks, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI Jacksonville Division. “The victims in this case suffered significant loss and pain as a result of this deception, never knowing they were without insurance coverage until disaster struck. The FBI and our law enforcement partners will continue to work on behalf of innocent victims and investigate and pursue those who selfishly commit fraud for personal gain at the expense of others.”

Florida CFO Jimmy Patronus said, “Insurance fraud is a serious crime that causes rates to go up for every hard-working family and business owner in Florida.” “Unfortunately, there are bad actors who think they can use fraud schemes like this to line their own pockets. I hope this case

serves as a warning that if you commit fraud in Florida, you will be caught and held accountable. Thank you to the U.S. Department of Justice, the FBI, the U.S. Attorney's Office and my dedicated insurance fraud detectives for helping put an end to this costly fraud scheme."

This case resulted from a joint investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigations and the Florida Department of Financial Services, Division of Investigative & Forensic Services, Bureau of Insurance Fraud. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jeffrey M. Tharp.

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