

FILED
12/15/2025 BI
THOMAS G. BRUTON
CLERK, U.S. DISTRICT COURT

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS
EASTERN DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Case No.

v.

Violations: Title 18, United States
Code, Sections 1343 and 1920

GRACIELA VENEGAS,
also known as "Graciela Salgado"

COUNT ONE

The SPECIAL APRIL 2025 GRAND JURY charges:

1. At times material to this Indictment:

The United States Postal Service

a. The United States Postal Service ("USPS") was an independent agency of the executive branch of the United States government.

b. USPS employees were part of the federal civil service, which consisted of, in part, all appointed positions in the executive branch of the United States government.

The United States Department of Labor and the Office of Workers' Compensation Program

c. The United States Department of Labor ("DOL") was an executive agency and department of the United States.

d. The DOL's Office of Workers' Compensation Programs ("OWCP") administered benefits under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act ("FECA"), which provided for the payment of workers' compensation to federal civil service employees.

e. The types of workers' compensation paid under FECA included, amongst other things, compensation for lost wages, loss of wage-earning capacity, and medical and related benefits for conditions resulting from injuries sustained in performance of a duty while in service to the United States.

f. OWCP was responsible for the implementation, oversight, and administration of the FECA compensation program, and for processing and authorizing payment of FECA claims filed by federal civil service employees.

**The OWCP's Processing and Administration of
FECA Claims by USPS Employees**

g. In general, to claim FECA benefits and compensation, a USPS employee must have sustained an injury while in the performance of their duties as a USPS employee.

h. A USPS employee who claimed FECA benefits resulting from a work-related traumatic injury was required to give notice of the injury and the type of compensation requested to USPS and OWCP on a Form CA-1, Federal Employee's Notice of Traumatic Injury and Claim for Continuation of Pay/Compensation. The CA-1 warned that any person who knowingly made a false statement, misrepresentation, concealment of fact, or any other act of fraud to obtain compensation as provided by FECA or who knowingly accepted compensation to which that person was not entitled, was subject to civil or administrative remedies as well as criminal prosecution.

i. Using the CA-1, OWCP created the employee's claim and if accepted, then notified the employee, thereafter referred to as the claimant, of the work-related condition or conditions accepted via a CA-1008 letter, Claim of Acceptance Letter. The CA-1008 letter warned the claimant that any person who knowingly made any false statement, misrepresentation, concealment of fact, or any other act of fraud to obtain compensation, or who knowingly accepted compensation to which he or she was not entitled, was subject to criminal prosecution.

j. If the employee submitted to OWCP a Form CA-7, Claim for Compensation, claiming wage loss compensation, he or she was required to indicate the type of compensation requested and whether the employee was claiming any dependents. Employees signed the CA-7 and certified that the information provided was true and accurate to the best of their knowledge and belief. The CA-7 warned that any person who knowingly made any false statement, misrepresentation, concealment of fact, or any other act of fraud, to obtain compensation as provided by FECA, or who knowingly accepted compensation to which that person was not entitled, was subject to civil or administrative remedies as well as criminal prosecution.

k. Once the employee submitted the CA-1 and the medical evidence, OWCP assessed whether the employee was entitled to FECA benefits due to a partial or total incapacity to earn wages (also referred to as a "disability") that resulted from the traumatic work-related injury.

l. If OWCP determined that an employee was entitled to FECA compensation, the employee was eligible to receive continuation of pay (“COP”) for lost wages or lost wage-earning capacity for an initial period of up to 45 calendar days. If the employee was partially or totally disabled after 45 days and the disability was expected to continue for more than 60-90 days, the employee was eventually placed on the “periodic rolls,” and would receive ongoing payments every 28 days.

m. OWCP used the information provided by the employee on the CA-1 and CA-7 to calculate the amount of FECA compensation payable to the claimant.

n. If a claim was awarded, OWCP notified the employee of its FECA compensation calculation and payments on an EN-1049 letter, which advised the employee to notify OWCP immediately of any change in the status of the employee’s dependents to avoid any compensation overpayment.

o. Once OWCP approved the payment of FECA compensation, the employee was paid through wire transfer from the Department of Treasury. Electronic FECA payments processed between approximately December 1, 2008 and September 4, 2023 were initiated by the Department of Treasury in Kansas City, Missouri and processed through Kansas City, Missouri and East Rutherford, New Jersey before being deposited in the employee’s bank account. FECA payments processed after approximately September 4, 2023 were initiated by the Department

of Treasury in Boulder, Colorado and processed through Kansas City, Missouri and East Rutherford, New Jersey, before being deposited in the employee's bank account.

Calculation of FECA Compensation Payments

p. If OWCP determined to pay FECA compensation for lost wages due to a total disability to an employee who did not claim any dependents, the employee was eligible to receive monthly monetary compensation equal to 66 and 2/3 percent of the monthly pay the employee was receiving at the time of the work-related injury. Alternatively, an employee who did not claim dependents but was entitled to FECA compensation for lost wage-earning capacity due to a partial disability, the employee was eligible to receive monthly monetary compensation equal to 66 and 2/3 percent of the difference between their monthly pay at the time of the work-related injury and their decreased wage-earning capacity due to the injury.

q. If the employee claimed at least one dependent and OWCP determined he or she was entitled to FECA compensation, the employee was also eligible to receive additional monthly monetary compensation, also known as "augmented" compensation, of 8 and 1/3 percent of their pre-injury monthly pay, or the difference between their pre-injury monthly pay and their decreased wage-earning capacity.

r. A spouse of an employee was considered a dependent for augmented compensation if: (a) the spouse was a member of the same household as the employee; (b) the spouse was receiving regular contributions from the employee

for the spouse's support; or (c) the employee had been ordered by a court to contribute to the spouse's support. To receive the additional 8 and 1/3 percent in augmented payment, the employee was required to identify their dependents on the CA-7.

s. Once OWCP calculated and approved FECA benefits, employees were entitled to receive those benefits only while the circumstances that justified the payments continued to exist. As a result, an employee who received FECA benefits for partial or total disability was required to advise OWCP immediately if they returned to work in a full-time or part-time status, and also had to report all outside employment and volunteer activities. Similarly, an employee who received augmented compensation payments because of a dependent was required to immediately advise OWCP of any change in the number or status of claimed dependents.

t. To further verify continued eligibility for FECA benefits, the beneficiary was also required to annually complete, certify, and submit to OWCP a Form EN-1032. The employee was required to report on the EN-1032 any work or activity indicating an ability to work, as well as any earnings from employment or self-employment, during the prior 15 months. The employee was also required to confirm the number and types of dependents for which they were responsible during the prior 15 months. OWCP relied upon the information provided by the employee in the EN-1032 to periodically assess the employee's continued FECA benefit eligibility

and to calculate the amount of FECA compensation payments to which the employee was entitled.

u. The EN-1032 advised the beneficiary that a claimant without eligible dependents was paid compensation at 66 and 2/3 percent of the applicable pay rate, while a claimant with one or more eligible dependents was paid compensation at 75 percent of the applicable pay rate, and that the employee must answer the questions on the form to ensure that that the employee's compensation was paid at the correct rate. The EN-1032 further explained the bases for which the employee could claim augmented compensation for a dependent spouse, but advised that the employee could not claim or receive augmented compensation for an ex-spouse, even if the employee had been ordered to provide support in the form of alimony.

v. When OWCP sent the employee an EN-1032 to complete, it included a letter with instructions to complete the form. The letter advised the employee that the information provided would be used to decide whether the employee was entitled to continue receiving FECA benefits and whether the employee's compensation payments should be adjusted. The letter further advised that the employee must report to OWCP any change in the status of claimed dependents, and that a fraudulent answer to any question could result in criminal prosecution.

w. By signing the EN-1032, the employee certified that all statements were true, complete, and correct to the best of their knowledge and belief, and that they understood that they must immediately report to OWCP any change in the status of claimed dependents. The EN-1032 further warned that anyone who failed to report income or other information which would have an effect on benefits, or who made a false statement or misrepresentation of a material fact in claiming a payment or benefit under FECA could be subject to criminal prosecution.

x. Employees who wished to electronically submit an EN-1032 could do so through the DOL's Employees' Compensation Operations & Management Portal ("ECOMP"). The server that processed ECOMP submissions was located in Northern Virginia.

The Defendant

y. Beginning no later than in or around July 1982, defendant GRACIELA VENEGAS, also known as "Graciela Salgado," was a USPS employee assigned to the South Suburban Post Office in Bedford Park, Illinois.

z. On or about May 19, 1979, VENEGAS married Individual A in Cook County, Illinois.

aa. On or about March 9, 2012, VENEGAS completed and submitted a Form CA-1 to OWCP claiming FECA compensation for an injury she sustained in the performance of her USPS duties. VENEGAS's CA-1 claimed Individual A as one of her dependents.

bb. On or about April 16, 2012, OWCP accepted VENEGAS's FECA claim. VENEGAS's FECA award included augmented compensation based in part upon her claiming Individual A as one of her dependents.

cc. On or about April 23, 2012, VENEGAS filed a Form CA-7 to OWCP for continued FECA compensation. VENEGAS's CA-1 continued to claim Individual A as one of her dependents.

dd. On or about May 18, 2012, VENEGAS was placed on the daily rolls and began receiving FECA benefits, including augmented compensation payments.

ee. On or about June 13, 2012, VENEGAS was placed on the periodic rolls and continued receiving monthly FECA compensation, including augmented compensation.

ff. During the period that VENEGAS received FECA compensation, she maintained and cause to maintained bank accounts where she received electronic payments of her FECA compensation. Between approximately July 15, 2022 and May 17, 2024, the account where VENEGAS received electronic FECA compensation payments was an account at People's Bank, which processed the electronic deposits in Brown Deer, Wisconsin (the "People's Bank Account").

gg. On or about March 7, 2013, VENEGAS' marriage to Individual A was dissolved by the Superior Court of Lake County, Indiana.

hh. No later than the date that VENEGAS' divorce from Individual A was finalized, VENEGAS was not entitled to augmented FECA compensation for Individual A.

ii. On or about January 28, 2014, Individual A passed away.

2. Beginning no later than in or around March 7, 2013 and continuing through on or about May 17, 2024, in the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division,

GRACIELA VENEGAS,
also known as "Graciela Salgado,"

defendant herein, knowingly devised, intended to devise, and participated in a scheme to defraud and obtain money in the form FECA compensation payments from the DOL OWCP by means of materially false and fraudulent pretenses, representations, and promises, which scheme is further described below.

3. It was part of the scheme that from on or about March 7, 2013, and continuing through on or about May 17, 2024, VENEGAS fraudulently received monthly augmented FECA compensation payments amounting to an additional 8 and 1/3 percent of her pre-injury monthly pay, when, as VENEGAS knew at the time, she was not longer entitled to augmented compensation due to her divorce from Individual A.

4. It was further part of the scheme that VENEGAS knowingly failed to advise DOL OWCP of the change in her number of dependents based upon the dissolution of her marriage to Individual A and Individual A's death.

5. It was further part of the scheme that VENEGAS fraudulently claimed Individual A as her dependent on multiple EN-1032s that she signed and certified on or about July 8, 2013, July 22, 2014, July 22, 2015, August 11, 2016, August 14, 2017, August 9, 2018, August 8, 2019, August 12, 2020, August 8, 2021, August 15, 2022, and August 22, 2023, and submitted to OWCP, when, as VENEGAS knew at the time, Individual A was no longer her dependent.

6. It was further part of the scheme that from approximately March 7, 2013, and continuing through approximately May 17, 2024, VENEGAS caused DOL OWCP to transfer, and caused to be transferred, monthly augmented FECA compensation payments from the Department of Treasury to bank accounts belonging to VENEGAS, including the People's Bank Account.

7. It was further part of the scheme that VENEGAS concealed, misrepresented, and hid, and caused to be concealed, misrepresented, and hidden, the existence and purpose of the scheme and the acts done in furtherance.

8. On or about August 15, 2022, at Chicago, in the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, and elsewhere,

GRACIELA VENEGAS,
also known as "Graciela Salgado,"

defendant herein, for the purpose of executing the above-described scheme, knowingly caused to be transmitted by means of wire communication in interstate commerce certain writings, signs, and signals, namely, a communication related to the electronic submission of a Form EN-1032 from VENEGAS to the Department of

Labor's Office of Worker Compensation Program, which was processed through servers located outside of Illinois;

In violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1343.

COUNT TWO

The SPECIAL APRIL 2025 GRAND JURY further charges:

1. The allegations in paragraphs 1 through 7 of Count One of this indictment are incorporated here.

2. On or about October 7, 2022, at Chicago, in the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, and elsewhere,

GRACIELA VENEGAS,
also known as “Graciela Salgado,”

defendant herein, for the purpose of executing the above-described scheme, knowingly caused to be transmitted by means of wire communication in interstate commerce from Kansas City, Missouri to Brown Deer, Wisconsin, certain writings, signs, and signals, namely an electronic deposit transfer of FECA compensation payments into a bank account belonging to VENEGAS in the amount of approximately \$2,919.24;

In violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1343.

COUNT THREE

The SPECIAL APRIL 2025 GRAND JURY further charges:

1. The allegations in paragraphs 1 through 7 of Count One of this indictment are incorporated here.

2. On or about August 22, 2023, at Chicago, in the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, and elsewhere,

GRACIELA VENEGAS,
also known as “Graciela Salgado,”

defendant herein, for the purpose of executing the above-described scheme, knowingly caused to be transmitted by means of wire communication in interstate commerce certain writings, signs, and signals, namely, a communication related to the electronic submission of a Form EN-1032 from VENEGAS to the Department of Labor’s Office of Worker Compensation Program, which was processed through servers located outside of Illinois;

In violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1343.

COUNT FOUR

The SPECIAL APRIL 2025 GRAND JURY further charges:

1. The allegations in paragraphs 1 through 7 of Count One of this indictment are incorporated here.

2. On or about October 6, 2023, at Chicago, in the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, and elsewhere,

GRACIELA VENEGAS,
also known as “Graciela Salgado,”

defendant herein, for the purpose of executing the above-described scheme, knowingly caused to be transmitted by means of wire communication in interstate commerce from Kansas City, Missouri to Brown Deer, Wisconsin, certain writings, signs, and signals, namely an electronic deposit transfer of FECA compensation payments into a bank account belonging to VENEGAS in the amount of approximately \$3,085.52;

In violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1343.

COUNT FIVE

The SPECIAL APRIL 2025 GRAND JURY further charges:

1. The allegations in paragraphs 1 through 7 of Count One of this indictment are incorporated here.

2. On or about May 17, 2024, at Chicago, in the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, and elsewhere,

GRACIELA VENEGAS,
also known as “Graciela Salgado,”

defendant herein, for the purpose of executing the above-described scheme, knowingly caused to be transmitted by means of wire communication in interstate commerce from Kansas City, Missouri to Brown Deer, Wisconsin, certain writings, signs, and signals, namely an electronic deposit transfer of FECA compensation payments into a bank account belonging to VENEGAS in the amount of approximately \$901.68;

In violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1343.

COUNT SIX

The SPECIAL APRIL 2025 GRAND JURY further charges:

1. The allegations in paragraphs 1 through 7 of Count One of this indictment are incorporated here.

2. Beginning no later than on or about March 7, 2013 and continuing through on or about May 17, 2024, at Chicago, in the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division,

GRACIELA VENEGAS,
also known as “Graciela Salgado,”

defendant herein, knowingly and willfully falsified, concealed, and covered up a material fact, and made a materially false, fictitious, and fraudulent statement and representation, and made and used a materially false statement and report to the Department of Labor to receive compensation under the Office of Worker’s Compensation Program, namely, a Form EN-1032, knowing the same to contain a false, fictitious, and fraudulent statement and entry in connection with the application for and receipt of Federal Employees’ Compensation Act compensation payments under Title 5, United States Code, Section 8100, in an amount exceeding \$1,000;

In violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1920.

FORFEITURE ALLEGATION

The SPECIAL APRIL 2025 GRAND JURY further alleges:

1. The allegations contained in Counts One through Five of this Indictment are hereby re-alleged and incorporated by reference for the purpose of alleging forfeitures pursuant to Title 18, United States Code, Section 981(a)(1)(C) and Title 28, United States Code, Section 2461(c). Upon conviction of any offense in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1343 as set forth in this Indictment, the defendant, GRACIELA VENEGAS shall forfeit to the United States of America any property which constitutes and is derived from proceeds traceable to the offense, as provided in Title 18, United States Code, Section 981(a)(1)(C) and Title 28, United States Code, Section 2461(c).

2. The property to be forfeited includes, but is not limited to, a personal money judgment in the amount of \$51,776.09.

3. If any of the property described above, as a result of any act or omission of the defendant (a) cannot be located upon the exercise of due diligence; (b) has been transferred or sold to, or deposited with, a third party; (c) has been placed beyond the jurisdiction of the court; (d) has been substantially diminished in value; or (e) has been commingled with other property which cannot be divided without difficulty, the United States of America shall be entitled to forfeiture of substitute property pursuant to Title 21, United States Code, Section 853(p), as incorporated by Title 28, United States Code, Section 2461(c).

All pursuant to Title 18, United States Code, Section 981(a)(1)(C) and Title 28,
United States Code, Section 2461(c).

A TRUE BILL:

FOREPERSON

Signed by Christine O'Neill on behalf of the
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY