

THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
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U.S. Attorney's Office

Middle District of Florida

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, September 2, 2021

Lehigh Acres Couple Indicted For COVID Relief Fraud

Fort Myers, Florida – Acting United States Attorney Karin Hoppmann announces the unsealing of an indictment charging Amber Rewis Bruey (34) and Anthony James Bruey (35), a married couple from Lehigh Acres, with conspiracy to commit wire fraud, wire fraud, conspiracy to commit money laundering, and illegal monetary transactions. The indictment also notifies the Brueys that the United States intends to forfeit a 2019 GMC Yukon XL, 2021 Chevrolet Spark LS, 2020 Honda Talon, 2020 Polaris RZR, real property in North Carolina, and \$881,058.35, which are alleged to be traceable to proceeds of the offense.

Defendant	Charge	Maximum Penalty per Count
Amber Rewis Bruey	Conspiracy to Commit Wire Fraud	30 years in federal prison
	Wire Fraud (10 Counts)	30 years in federal prison
	Conspiracy to Commit Money Laundering	10 years in federal prison
	Illegal Monetary Transactions (4 Counts)	10 years in federal prison
Anthony James Bruey	Conspiracy to Commit Wire Fraud	30 years in federal prison
	Wire Fraud (2 Counts)	30 years in federal prison
	Conspiracy to Commit Money Laundering	10 years in federal prison

	Illegal Monetary Transactions (2 Counts)	10 years in federal prison
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According to the [indictment](#), beginning in or around April 2020, and while they were both on probation for state criminal charges, the Brueys conspired to submit false and fraudulent Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) and Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) applications to the Small Business Administration (SBA) and PPP loan servicers and lenders. The loan applications contained numerous false representations, including the criminal history, dates of operation, number of employees, and gross revenues of the applicant. In support of their fraudulent EIDL and PPP loan applications, the Brueys submitted false and fictitious federal income tax documents.

The Brueys' materially false, fraudulent, and misleading representations caused the SBA and PPP lenders to approve and fund six EIDL and six PPP loans, totaling \$881,058.35. The Brueys then unlawfully used the funds to purchase a \$211,457 residence in North Carolina, a 2019 GMC Yukon SUV, a 2020 Honda Talon, and to make a \$23,566 restitution payment as a condition of probation in a criminal court case for Amber Bruey.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act is a federal law enacted March 2020. It is designed to provide emergency financial assistance to millions of Americans who are suffering the economic effects resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. One source of relief provided by the CARES Act is the authorization of up to \$349 billion in forgivable loans to small businesses for job retention and certain other expenses through the PPP. In April 2020, Congress authorized over \$300 billion in additional PPP funding.

The PPP allows qualifying small businesses and other organizations to receive loans with a maturity of two years and an interest rate of one percent. Businesses must use PPP loan proceeds for payroll costs, interest on mortgages, rent and utilities. The PPP allows the interest and principal to be forgiven if the business spends the proceeds on these expenses within a set time period and uses at least a certain percentage of the loan toward payroll expenses.

The EIDL program is designed to provide economic relief to small businesses that are currently experiencing a temporary loss of revenue. EIDL proceeds can be used to cover a wide array of working capital and normal operating expenses, such as continuation of health care benefits, rent, utilities, and fixed debt payments. If an applicant also obtains a loan under the PPP, the EIDL funds cannot be used for the same purpose as the PPP funds.

An indictment is merely a formal charge that a defendant has committed one or more violations of federal criminal law, and every defendant is presumed innocent unless, and until, proven guilty.

This case was investigated by the United States Secret Service. It will be prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Trent Reichling and Suzanne Nebesky.

Attachment(s):

[Download Indictment](#)

Topic(s):

Coronavirus

Disaster Fraud

Financial Fraud

Component(s):
USAO - Florida, Middle

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