

Attorney General Raoul Announces Attorney General's Task Force on Unemployment

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Chicago – Attorney General Kwame Raoul today announced his office is partnering with the FBI to establish the Attorney General’s Task Force on Unemployment Insurance Benefits Fraud. The task force will for the first time allow state and federal resources to be deployed on a large scale to combat unemployment insurance benefits fraud.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Raoul’s office has received and investigated complaints related to unemployment insurance benefits fraud. The aim of the task force is to enhance collaboration among state and federal agencies investigating and prosecuting forms of unemployment benefits fraud. In addition to the Illinois Attorney General’s office and the FBI, the task force will be made up of the Illinois Department of Employment Security, the Illinois State Police, the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, the Illinois Department of Revenue, the Internal Revenue Service, as well as the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police and the Illinois State’s Attorneys Association.

“The Task Force on Unemployment Insurance Benefits Fraud will for the first time allow a broad coalition of federal, state and local law enforcement to collaborate and share resources and address widespread unemployment insurance benefits fraud,” Raoul said. “I appreciate the FBI dedicating the needed resources and look forward to working with our partner agencies to investigate and hold accountable those who steal federal funding that is intended to help residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

“While the citizens of Illinois have worked to regain financial stability after last year’s tumultuous job market, criminals have sought to do them harm,” FBI Special Agent in Charge Emmerson Buie Jr said. “With today’s announcement of a joint unemployment task force, we commit to working with our local, state, and federal partners to ensure

that those who would steal resources from our most vulnerable are brought to swift justice.”

“Bad actors have taken advantage of a global pandemic that has pushed desperate people to unemployment insurance agencies for economic relief,” IDES Acting Director Kristin Richards said. “While this massive fraud scheme has redirected the valuable man-hours and resources the Department would be better served to use assisting claimants, IDES remains committed to detecting and shutting these claims down and will continue to support law enforcement’s efforts to find the fraudsters behind these crimes.”

“The Illinois State Police are here to coordinate, facilitate and share intelligence on fraudulent activity,” Illinois State Police Director Brendan F. Kelly said. “It is through multi-jurisdictional partnerships such as these that will allow us to better combat and contain this criminal conduct.”

“An important mission of the Office of Inspector General is to investigate allegations relating to unemployment insurance fraud. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to investigate these types of allegations,” Irene Lindow, Special Agent-in-Charge, Chicago Region, U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General said.

“As the 2021 tax filing season nears, the Illinois Department of Revenue remains focused on preventing fraudulent income tax refunds, including those perpetrated through unemployment insurance claims.” Illinois Department of Revenue Director David Harris said. “We look forward to working with our state and federal partners on Attorney General Raoul’s Task Force to end this criminal activity and assist victims of fraudulent claims.”

According to the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES), the increase in identity theft unemployment fraud can likely be attributed to large corporate data breaches and is not the result of any state system breaches. These breaches compromised personal information including Social Security numbers, driver’s license numbers, names, dates of birth, credit card numbers and addresses – information individuals must provide when applying for loans or lines of credit, or during other interactions.

Currently, state unemployment agencies throughout the nation are battling widespread fraud by individuals seeking to steal federal money. Using personal information obtained as a result of data breaches, thieves are applying for unemployment insurance benefits for which they are not eligible. The IDES strongly encourages anyone who has received notice that an unemployment insurance claim has been fraudulently filed in

their name to immediately report the claim to the department [via its website](#) or by calling 800-814-0513. To date, the IDES has stopped more than 350,000 fraudulent claims.

Attorney General Raoul encourages individuals who think their personal or financial information has been compromised to take steps to protect themselves. People should closely monitor credit reports, consider requesting a fraud alert by contacting one of the three nationwide credit bureaus, consider placing a freeze on credit reports, and closely review and monitor all financial accounts for any unauthorized charges.

Additional information on how to protect yourself from potential identity theft is available free of charge on the [Illinois Attorney General's website](#). Residents can also call the Attorney General's Identity Theft Hotline at 1-866-999-5630 for assistance.