



Theft of Government Funds and more...

.... see what happened this past week in the Eastern District of Louisiana

CASE SPOTLIGHT

United States v. Pichon

24-cr-144

What's the Basis?: According to the Factual Basis, **Pichon fraudulently applied for and received approximately \$194,642 in Paycheck Protection Program funds and an additional \$159,900 in Economic Injury Disaster Loan funds**, along with a \$10,000 advance, on behalf of her business, Exotica Beauty LLC. To secure these funds, **she submitted false information regarding payroll expenses, number of employees, and business revenue**, knowing that this false information would increase her loan amounts.

Bank records revealed that shortly after receiving the funds, **Pichon made substantial cash withdrawals and diverted portions of the proceeds for personal expenditures**, including luxury retail purchases and travel.

What's the Violation?: Pichon pled guilty to Theft of Government Funds and False Statements, in violation of **18 U.S.C. §§ 641 and 1001**.

What's the Punishment?: The Honorable Judge Susie Morgan sentenced Pichon to **5 years of Probation**.

This Week's Other Matters

U.S. v. MENDEZ-FRANCISCO, 25-CR-206

Charge: Illegal Reentry of a Removed Alien
(8 U.S.C. § 1326(a)(b)(1))

Sentence: **24 months imprisonment** and 3 years of supervised release.

Judge: Honorable Brandon S. Long

U.S. v. SMITH, 25-CR-092

Charge: Possession with intent to distribute
(21 U.S.C. § 841(a)(1), 841(b)(1)(C))

Sentence: **63 months of imprisonment** and 3 years of supervised release.

Judge: Honorable Carl J. Barbier

U.S. v. SMITH, 25-CR-092

Charge: Felon in Possession of a Firearm
(18 U.S.C. §§ 922(g)(1) and 924(a)(8))

Sentence: **160 months of imprisonment** and 5 years of supervised release.

Judge: Honorable Wendy B. Vitter

WHAT'S THAT STATUTE?

CLICK ON THE LINKS BELOW FOR MORE
DETAILS ON THE VIOLATIONS INCLUDED IN
THIS WEEKS' EDITION

- [8 U.S.C. § 1326](#)
- [18 U.S.C. § 641](#)
- [18 U.S.C. § 922](#)
- [18 U.S.C. § 924](#)
- [18 U.S.C. § 1001](#)
- [21 U.S.C. § 841](#)
- [21 U.S.C. § 846](#)



U.S. V. ALFORD, 24-CR-245

Charge: Felon in Possession of a Firearm; Possession with intent to distribute
(21 U.S.C. §§ 841(a)(1), 841(b)(1)(C); 18 U.S.C. §§ 922(g)(1), 924(a)(8))

Sentence: **160 months of imprisonment** and 2 years of supervised release.

Judge: Honorable Wendy B. Vitter

U.S. V. PICQUET, 24-CR-228

Charge: Conspiracy to Distribute and Possess with intent to Distribute a Quantity of a Mixture and Substance of Fentanyl, and Distribution of a Quantity of a Mixture and Substance of Fentanyl
(21 U.S.C. §§ 841(a)(1), 841(b)(1)(C), 846; 21 U.S.C. §§ 841(a)(1), 841(b)(1)(C))

Sentence: **38 months of imprisonment** and 3 years of supervised release.

Judge: Honorable Brandon S. Long

U.S. V. HANKTON, 25-CR-128

Charge: Felon in Possession of a Firearm
(18 U.S.C. §§ 922(g)(1) and 924(a)(8))

Sentence: **60 months imprisonment** and 3 years of supervised release.

Judge: Honorable Darrel J. Papillion

Did You Know?

Today's Case Spotlight relates to COVID-19 relief loans and the federal government's continued enforcement efforts surrounding those programs. While cases like Pichon focus on PPP and EIDL fraud, recent prosecutions show that enforcement extends well beyond loan applications and into broader misuse of pandemic-related funds.

In a case highlighted by the Department of Justice, a **Nevada business owner was sentenced to 54 months in prison for orchestrating a scheme involving nearly \$100 million in fraudulent COVID-related tax credit claims**. The **scheme resulted in approximately \$33 million being paid out by the IRS**, with proceeds used for luxury purchases, travel, and personal expenses.

This prosecution was part of a broader DOJ announcement emphasizing that **the government is actively pursuing what it described as "half a billion dollars" in healthcare and COVID fraud schemes** in a single enforcement push.

The takeaway is consistent with today's case. Whether through inflated payroll figures in PPP applications, misstatements in EIDL submissions, or fraudulent tax credit filings, federal investigators are continuing to build cases years after the funds were distributed. These cases often rely on financial records, tax filings, and data analytics, and they routinely result in significant sentences and restitution orders.

Hebrews 13:3 - Remember the prisoners as if chained with them - those who are mistreated - since you yourselves are in the body also.

**Heed His word and pray for the detained,
incarcerated, and less fortunate among us.**

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