



PRESS RELEASE

Non-Profit A Jewish Voice for Peace, Inc. to Pay \$677,634 to Resolve PPP Fraud Allegations

Tuesday, January 14, 2025

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of
Columbia

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WASHINGTON – A Jewish Voice for Peace, Inc., a Washington, D.C., based nonprofit organization, has agreed to pay \$677,634 to settle allegations that the organization violated the False Claims Act when it applied for and received a \$338,817 second-draw loan under the Paycheck Protection Act Program of the CARES Act Disaster Relief Program, and when it further applied for and was granted forgiveness of the entire amount of the loan.

The agreement was announced by U.S. Attorney Matthew M. Graves and U.S. Small Business Administration General Counsel Therese Meers.

In March 2020, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was created to provide emergency financial support to Americans suffering economic hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The CARES Act authorized billions of dollars in forgivable loans to small businesses and other entities, including non-profit organizations, struggling to pay employees and other business expenses. Under the applicable provision of the CARES Act, a business concern or other entity, including a nonprofit organization, is not eligible to receive a second draw loan if it is primarily engaged in political or lobbying activities, which

shall include any entity that is organized for research or for engaging in advocacy in areas such as public policy or political strategy or otherwise describes itself as a think tank in any public document.

At the time it applied for the second draw PPP loan, A Jewish Voice for Peace certified to its lender and the SBA in the loan application that it was “not a business concern or entity primarily engaged in political or lobbying activities, including any entity that is organized for research or for engaging in advocacy in areas such as public policy or political strategy or otherwise describes itself as a think tank in any public documents.” It further certified in the loan forgiveness application that it met the conditions for receiving the second draw PPP loan. The investigation revealed that A Jewish Voice for Peace was primarily engaged in political activities. A Jewish Voice for Peace contends that any misstatements in this application were inadvertent.

“The Paycheck Protection Act Program existed to help businesses survive a devastating global pandemic,” said U.S. Attorney Graves. “When business owners unfairly drain those funds – either by not reading the eligibility requirements or disregarding them – they put the entire program at risk. In the end, those who are harmed are the businesses that actually qualified for and needed the money, and the taxpayers who funded the program.”

“The favorable settlement in this case is the product of enhanced efforts by federal agencies such as the Small Business Administration working with the U.S. Attorney’s Office, SBA’s Office of Inspector General and other Federal law enforcement agencies, as well as private individuals who uncover fraudulent conduct to recover the product of this fraud as well as penalties,” said SBA General Counsel Therese Meers.

Under the False Claims Act, a party found to violate the Act must pay three-times the amount of damage to the United States. Had A Jewish Voice for Peace been found liable to the United States under the False Claims Act, it would have been ordered to pay three times the amount of the loan and lost interest, along with civil penalties for each false certification made in the loan application and forgiveness application. In connection with this settlement, A Jewish Voice for Peace agreed to pay an amount equal to two-times the loan amount, or \$677,634.

The settlement announced today stems from a Federal investigation that was initiated

when another public interest group, TZAC, filed a whistleblower complaint pursuant to the *qui tam* provisions of the False Claims Act. The claims resolved by the civil settlement are allegations only. There has been no determination of liability in the civil case.

The civil settlement was the result of an investigation by Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephen DeGenaro and Auditor Timothy Hurley of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia. U.S. Attorney Graves commended Attorneys Kandace Zelaya and Arlene Messengerlerner of the U.S. Small Business Administration Office of the General Counsel for their assistance in the investigation and settlement negotiations. The case is captioned *U.S. ex rel. TZAC v. A Jewish Voice for Peace, Inc.*

Tips and complaints regarding potential fraud affecting COVID-19 government relief programs can be reported by calling the Department of Justice's National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) Hotline at (866) 720-5721 or by submitting a NCDF Web Complaint form at <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form>

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