



Former Amtrak employee sentenced to prison for bilking pandemic relief program of nearly \$1 million

July 18, 2025

LOS ANGELES – A former Amtrak employee was sentenced Thursday to 25 months in federal prison for conspiring with her husband to steal nearly \$1 million in pandemic-related unemployment insurance benefits and for bilking more than \$63,000 in sickness benefits while she worked at Amtrak, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office, Central District of California.

Lizette Berrios Lathon, 48, of Moreno Valley, who pleaded guilty in 2022 to one count of conspiracy to commit mail fraud, one count of aggravated identity theft, and one count of wire fraud, was also ordered to pay \$1,061,667 in restitution. In addition, her husband, Kenneth Andrew Lathon, 50, also of Moreno Valley, was previously sentenced to 54 months in federal prison, and he was ordered to pay \$998,630 in restitution. He also pleaded guilty in 2022 to one count of conspiracy to commit mail fraud and wire fraud, one count of aggravated identity theft, and one count of unlawful possession of a firearm by a convicted felon.

From 2014 until September 2022, Lizette Lathon, in addition to her duties as a service attendant for Amtrak, operated at least three tax preparation businesses. Using names, Social Security numbers and dates of birth that she obtained from former clients of her tax preparation businesses without their permission, she submitted fraudulent applications with the California Employment Development Department (EDD) for unemployment benefits of those former clients. On the EDD applications, she falsely asserted inflated income for the named claimants—many of whom had never lived in California—to receive the maximum benefit amount.

As a result of the scheme, the California EDD authorized Bank of America to issue debit cards in the names of Lizette Lathon's former clients, but the cards were mailed to addresses she and her family controlled. She and her husband then used the debit cards to make cash withdrawals at ATMs and to make purchases at retail stores.

During the conspiracy, which lasted from the spring of 2020 until March 2021, Lathon and her husband caused at least 44 fraudulent unemployment claims to be filed, resulting in losses to the California EDD and the United States Treasury of approximately \$998,630.

Lathon also defrauded the Railroad Retirement Board out of sickness benefit payments by filing forged and false claims that stated she was being treated by a medical professional for pain and anxiety. Through this scheme, which lasted from September 2014 to January 2020, she fraudulently obtained approximately \$63,047 in sickness benefit payments.

In addition to Amtrak OIG, this case was investigated by the United States Railroad Retirement Board OIG; the United States Department of Labor OIG; the United States Department of Labor

Employee Benefits Security Administration; the California Employment Development Department; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; Homeland Security Investigations; and the United States Postal Inspection Service.

Anyone with information about allegations of attempted fraud involving COVID-19 can report it by calling the Department of Justice's National Center for Disaster Fraud Hotline at (866) 720-5721 or via the NCDF Web Complaint Form at: <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form>.

In addition, reports of fraud, waste, or abuse; criminal or unethical acts affecting Amtrak's property or operations; or mismanagement in Amtrak programs or operations can be made 24 hours a day via the Amtrak OIG Hotline at 1-800-468-5469 or online at <https://direc.to/hPAu>.

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