



Amtrak OIG-supported investigation leads to charges against six family members for alleged pandemic relief fraud

November 24, 2025

NEW YORK — Six family members were indicted November 17, 2025, for allegedly conspiring to steal more than \$166,000 in federal pandemic relief as the result of a joint investigation supported by Amtrak's Office of Inspector General.

According to a press release from the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office, the group allegedly fraudulently applied for Paycheck Protection Program and Economic Injury Disaster Loans.

Karima Branche, 46, of Brooklyn; Faye Wilkie-Fields, 68, of Brooklyn; Wilworth Branche, 70, of Georgia; Carol Horton, 68, of Brooklyn; Monique Horton, 38, of Brooklyn; and Paul Neufville, 41, of Florida were variously charged in a 23-count indictment with fourth-degree conspiracy, second-degree grand larceny, 11 counts of third-degree grand larceny, two counts of fourth-degree grand larceny, seven counts of first-degree falsifying business records, and one count of third-degree attempted grand larceny.

In addition to the PPP loan fraud charges, Karima Branche is charged with third-degree grand larceny related to an Economic Injury Disaster Loan advance. Wilkie-Fields is charged with attempted third-degree grand larceny related to an Economic Injury Disaster Loan advance. Carol Horton and Monique Horton are also charged with third- and fourth-degree grand larceny for allegedly fraudulently obtaining Pandemic Unemployment Assistance benefits from the New York State Department of Labor.

Neufville allegedly coordinated the applications and received payments from several co-defendants ranging from \$500 to \$2,500 marked for "services." Investigators found that the defendants later submitted loan forgiveness applications claiming that at least 60 percent of the proceeds were used for payroll.

The defendants were released without bail and were ordered to return to court on January 28, 2026.

In addition to Amtrak OIG, the case was investigated by the U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Small Business Administration, New York State Department of Labor, Social Security Administration OIG, New York State Department of Taxation, and Homeland Security Investigations.

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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