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Massachusetts Man Charged with Stealing \$25,000 in Unemployment Compensation

A 37-year-old electrician has been indicted for receiving unemployment benefits for almost four years while he was working full time, Mercer County Prosecutor Angelo J. Onofri reported.

A Mercer County grand jury returned an indictment on August 29, 2018, charging Guiseppe Torrente, of Gloucester, MA, with one count of third-degree theft by deception. Mercer County Superior Court Judge Thomas M. Brown issued a warrant for Torrente's arrest on September 24, 2018, when he failed to appear for his arraignment.

In June 2018, the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development contacted the prosecutor's Economic Crime Unit (ECU) regarding a fraud involving unemployment benefits. A continued investigation revealed that between April 2014 and August 2016, Torrente received 43 weeks of unemployment compensation totaling \$25,294 while he was working full time as an electrician for Chesterfield Electric & HVAC.

"My office is committed to protecting the integrity of important state programs," Prosecutor Onofri said. "We will continue to work with local, state and federal partners to investigate and prosecute anyone attempting to take advantage of the system or steal from the government."

"The New Jersey Department of Labor is steadfast in pursuing cases involving unemployment fraud," Labor Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo said. "Our diligent investigators have the technology and resources to identify fraudulent claims activity, and with the help of our partners, we will continue to put an end to these illegal activities."

Onofri credited Detectives David Petelle and Charles Antinoro of his Economic Crime Unit and Investigators Luke Schaffer and Thomas Fink with the state Department of Labor and Workforce Development with the investigation leading to the charge. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant Prosecutor Rachel Cook, chief of the ECU.

Third-degree crimes carry a maximum penalty of five years in state prison and a \$15,000 fine.

Despite having been indicted, every defendant is presumed innocent until found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

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