



**Fort Bend County District Attorney's Office
Press Release**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Eight Indicted for Theft of Covid Relief Funds

Richmond, TX – District Attorney Brian Middleton announced today that a Fort Bend County Grand Jury recently indicted eight individuals for engaging in organized criminal activity related to the alleged theft of approximately \$730,000 in COVID-19 funds. The charges carry a potential penalty of 15 to 99 years in prison.

The indictments are the most recent obtained by the Fort Bend County District Attorney's Public Integrity Division, to recover funds that were intended to assist legitimate Fort Bend County businesses to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security Inspector General (DHS-OIG) investigated the case with investigators from the District Attorney's Office.

Dr. Joseph V. Cuffari, Inspector General for the Department of Homeland Security stated, "DHS OIG continues to successfully investigate COVID-19 pandemic fraud and will continue to partner with federal, state, and local law enforcement partners to seek justice. Funds stolen from the US Taxpayer through fraudulent means deprive deserving recipients and will not be tolerated."

"Government relief programs are designed to intervene in a crisis to prevent financial and social catastrophe," said District Attorney Brian Middleton. "Stealing from aid programs intended to assist citizens in need is akin to stealing from the plate at church – and it's despicable. My office will prosecute these offenses to protect our community and get those valuable resources redirected back where they belong."

Middleton formed the Public Integrity Division in 2019 to investigate and prosecute crimes committed by government officials and employees. The division was expanded in 2021 to specifically target pandemic relief fraud through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). In 2023 alone, the division has prosecuted eleven individuals for fraud regarding pandemic-relief funds.

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