



SIGTARP

Office of the Special Inspector General
For The Troubled Asset Relief Program

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, July 23, 2021

Media Inquiries: 202-927-8940

www.sigtar.gov

@SIGTARP

Three Sentenced in Bank Fraud of Government Housing Assistance Program in South Carolina

Acting United States Attorney M. Rhett DeHart announced today that three South Carolinians have been sentenced by a federal judge after pleading guilty to bank fraud charges in schemes that defrauded the federal government's Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP).

Marvette Thompson Easterling, 54, of Gaffney; Keylon Wright, 40, of Simpsonville; and Joshua David Armato, 37, of Georgia; admitted that they knowingly defrauded a program established to help homeowners at risk of mortgage loan default and foreclosure of thousands of dollars.

U.S. District Judge Bruce Howe Hendricks ordered each defendant to a sentence of time served followed by five years of supervised release and the repayment of the stolen funds for the felony charges.

“With today’s sentencing, SIGTARP and the United States Attorney’s Office have brought justice for defendants who defraud and steal from the Hardest Hit Fund, a federal program that helps unemployed homeowners stay in their home,” said Special Inspector General Christy Goldsmith Romero. “Easterling, Wright, and Armato separately lied to get thousands of federal dollars for mortgage assistance, concealing that they did not live in the house and concealing rental income. Now they are convicted of fraud and must repay the stolen funds.”

“Stealing from the federal government, particularly from programs that help the least fortunate in America, will not be tolerated,” said Acting U.S. Attorney DeHart. “Our office appreciates the investigative work of the Special Inspector General for TARP (SIGTARP) and will continue to work with SIGTARP to protect American tax dollars.”

Evidence presented in court showed that through false and fraudulent pretenses, representations, and promises, Easterling obtained funds from SC Housing, a federally funded mortgage payment assistance program that provided eligible homeowners with temporary mortgage assistance so that they could avoid foreclosure and stay in their homes. Easterling concealed and failed to notify SC Housing of monthly rental income she received for the property as well as the non-owner-occupied status of the property in order to receive and use federal funds to which she was not eligible.

Additional evidence presented in court further showed that Wright executed a similar scheme for a property in Mauldin, while Armato executed a similar scheme for a property in

Simpsonville. Wright and Armato concealed and failed to notify SC Housing of the non-owner occupied statuses of their properties and the rental of the properties to unrelated third parties in order to receive and use federal funds to which they were not eligible.

The cases were investigated by SIGTARP, as an independent law enforcement agency used to investigate fraud, waste, and abuse related to the TARP bailout.

Assistant United States Attorney Winston Marosek prosecuted the cases.

About SIGTARP

SIGTARP is a federal law enforcement agency that investigates crime and civil violations of the law related to the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act (EESA). SIGTARP investigations have resulted in the recovery of more than \$11.2 billion, criminal prosecutions of 460 defendants with 309 sentenced to prison, and civil enforcement actions against 25 corporations/entities.

To report a suspected crime related to EESA programs, call SIGTARP's Crime Tip Hotline: 1-877-SIG-2009 (1-877-744-2009). To receive alerts about reports, audits, media releases, and other SIGTARP news, sign up at www.SIGTARP.gov/pages/press.aspx. Follow SIGTARP on Twitter @SIGTARP.