

JUSTICE NEWS

Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, October 28, 2020

Imposter Nurse Sentenced to Prison for Fraud and Tax Evasion

Received \$2.2 Million Under False Pretenses and Did Not Pay \$697,000 in Taxes

A woman formerly employed by an Ann Arbor, Michigan, health care consultancy was sentenced to 65 months in prison for defrauding employers of over \$2.2 million and evading more than \$697,000 in taxes, announced Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Richard E. Zuckerman of the Justice Department's Tax Division and U.S. Attorney Matthew J. Schneider for the Eastern District of Michigan.

According to documents and information provided to the court, Sonja Emery, using several aliases including "Sonja Lee Robinson," "Sonjalee Emery-Robinson," and "Sonjalee Emery," resided in Georgia, New Jersey, New York, and California. From 2011 through 2018, Emery falsely represented her professional status, educational background, and work experience to secure and maintain highly paid consulting positions in the health-care industry. She falsely claimed to be a Registered Nurse licensed in New York, Georgia, Connecticut, and California, and provided employers with licensure numbers that belonged to other people. In fact, she never was a Registered Nurse. Emery also falsely told employers she had a Bachelor of Science in Nursing, a Master's degree in Health Administration, a Master's degree in Business Administration, and a Doctor of Philosophy degree from Emory and New York Universities, but Emery never attended those schools or received such degrees.

Using these false representations, from 2011 through 2018, Emery secured high-level health-care positions. She worked as a senior vice president for an Ann Arbor, Michigan, healthcare consulting firm earning an annual salary of approximately \$285,000; as a consultant for a community health system in Wisconsin earning approximately \$267,000; and as a health care consultant for a Massachusetts company that paid her approximately \$226,000. From 2015 until her arrest in May of 2018, Emery worked as a senior executive for a county government health services agency in California that paid her a total of approximately \$960,000.

During these years, Emery either did not file or late-filed tax returns, despite owing more than \$400,000 in taxes. She sought to avoid being detected by providing employers with different names and false social security numbers, by falsely instructing employers that she was "exempt" from taxes, and by supplying an employer with an identification number that did not belong to her.

On Feb. 18, 2020, Emery pleaded guilty to mail fraud and tax evasion.

In addition to the term of imprisonment, U.S. District Linda V. Parker ordered Emery to serve three years of supervised release and to pay approximately \$2.2 million in restitution to the employer victims and \$697,000 in restitution to the United States.

Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Zuckerman, U.S. Attorney Schneider, Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) Special Agent in Charge William A. Kalb, and Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation (IRS-CI) Special Agent in Charge Sarah Kull thanked special agents of TIGTA and IRS-CI, who investigated the case, and Trial Attorneys Jack Morgan and Jeffrey McLellan of the Tax Division, who prosecuted the case.

Additional information about the Tax Division and its enforcement efforts may be found on the division's [website](#).

Topic(s):

Financial Fraud

Tax

Component(s):

[Tax Division](#)

[USAO - Michigan, Eastern](#)

Press Release Number:

20-1169

Updated October 28, 2020