

STATEMENT

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Washington, D.C. — As DOGE reexamines information that the Department of Labor Office of Inspector General has been using to detect, prevent and recoup billions in pandemic era fraud, information they have surfaced has resulted in the spread of misinformation and presenting old issues as newly discovered. To help provide context to this issue, Michele Evermore, a senior fellow at the National Academy of Social Insurance and a leading unemployment insurance expert, released the following statement in response:

Late Wednesday night, the Department of Government Efficiency tweeted details it discovered after combing through Personally Identifiable Information (PII) that was initially given to the Department of Labor (DOL) Office of Inspector General (DOL) to identify and prevent fraud in the UI program. These issues have been known since mid-2020. More information about the nature of this fraud has been well-documented. The National Academy of Social Insurance has issued a statement of principle as fraud prevention legislation is moving in Congress.

The tweet in question describes data it has found with strange dates. That likely means that this was known fraud where stolen data from past breaches, such as the Equifax breach, were used to apply for unemployment compensation unlawfully. In the case that states identified probable identity theft, DOL encouraged states to set up pseudo-identities to protect the victims of identity theft from further exposure and to preserve the ability of the innocent individuals who were impersonated to apply for unemployment in the future.

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People with experience in data management and computer programming should know that dummy variables are sometimes entered in fields such as date of birth so that the batch of known fraudsters can easily be called up in one batch.

The real issue here is that people completely unaware of a well-documented and well-studied issue have access to claimant PII and why they are tweeting about sensitive data when carefully written documents are available to the public. It is further concerning that sensitive data is being managed by people clearly unaware of programming and data management basics. Before sifting through sensitive personal data, it would be far more efficient for those wishing to understand program integrity efforts in unemployment insurance to review the wide body of work that the OIG and also the Government Accountability Office have done and the significant progress that the DOL and states have made to combat fraud.

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Founded in 1986, the National Academy of Social Insurance is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization made up of the nation's leading experts on social insurance policy, practice, research, and innovation. From Social Security and Supplemental Security Income; to Medicare, Medicaid, and the Affordable Care Act; to Workers' Compensation and Unemployment Insurance; to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and income-boosting tax credits, America's social insurance ecosystem serves as the bedrock of economic protection against the risks of life — such as when we retire, lose a job, experience disability/illness, or lose a family breadwinner. For nearly 40 years, the Academy and its powerful, diverse member network have championed the safeguarding, strengthening, and modernizing of social insurance and worked to increase public understanding of how it contributes to economic security.