

Department of Justice  
U.S. Attorney's Office  
Central District of California

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Trucking School Owner Sentenced to 4 Years in Federal Prison for Fraudulently Obtaining \$4.1 Million in Veterans' Education Benefits**

*LOS ANGELES* – The owner of a San Fernando Valley trucking school was sentenced today to 48 months for leading a sophisticated scheme to defraud the United States Department of Veterans Affairs out of more than \$4 million in education benefits involving over 100 veterans who did not attend classes.

Emmit Marshall, 53, of Woodland Hills, was sentenced by United States District Judge Stephen V. Wilson, who also ordered him to pay \$4.1 million in restitution. Marshall pleaded guilty in July 2019 to five counts of wire fraud.

At the hearing, Judge Wilson stated that this “was a very serious fraud on the government,” which involved “calculated, criminal acts that cannot be condoned.”

Marshall is the owner and president of the Chatsworth-based Alliance School of Trucking (AST). Marshall and a co-defendant, AST Vice President Robert Waggoner, 57, of Canyon Country, recruited eligible veterans to take trucking classes paid under the Post-9/11 GI Bill. AST was certified to offer classes under the Post-9/11 GI Bill, including a 160-hour Tractor Trailer & Safety class and a 600-hour Select Driver Development Program.

Under the Post-9/11 GI Bill, the VA paid tuition and fees directly to the school at which veterans were enrolled. The VA also paid a housing allowance to veterans enrolled full-time in an approved program, and, in some cases, the VA paid for books and supplies for veterans' benefit.

From July 2011 to April 2015, Marshall and Waggoner convinced more than 100 veterans to participate by telling them they were entitled to VA education benefits, even if they did not attend classes. Despite not taking classes, the veterans who agreed to join the scheme accepted education benefits for housing while AST collected the benefits for tuition, resulting in a total loss to the VA of at least \$4.1 million.

In addition, Marshall resorted to occasionally using veterans' personal information to sign them up for benefits, forging signatures, sometimes without the veterans' permission. Finally, in an

attempt to obfuscate the overall scheme and the forgeries of student enrollment paperwork, Marshall directed the veteran-students to lie to VA investigators and ordered the destruction of AST paperwork by co-schemers.

“[Marshall] profited most from this conduct, pocketing nearly \$1 million himself, which he used for jewelry, a cruise, a trip to Hawaii, property taxes on his Woodland Hills residence, purchase of a Ford F-150 and purchase of semi-tractor trailers for a new business,” prosecutors wrote in their sentencing memorandum.

Waggoner pleaded guilty on February 24 to five counts of wire fraud. His sentencing hearing is scheduled for March 15, 2021, at which time he will face a statutory maximum sentence of 100 years in federal prison.

This matter was investigated by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General, the U.S. Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General, and the FBI.

This case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Kimberly D. Jaimez of the Major Frauds Section.