

News Article ⓘ

Former Arizona News Anchor Sentenced For Pandemic Fraud: What To Know

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Newsweek contacted Hockridge's attorney for comment by email after business hours.

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Why It Matters

The sentencing comes as efforts are being made to hold accountable those who exploited relief measures accountable, in the United States and also in other countries.

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unemployment and benefit money, had been stolen from \$3.4 trillion of COVID-19 relief funds.

What To Know

From about April 2020 to May 2021, the former television anchor, Hockridge, 42, took part in a scheme that swindled tens of millions of dollars in Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans, the Justice Department said.

Hockridge co-founded a company called Blueacorn in April 2020 with her husband, Nathan Reis, to help small businesses get the loans, which were intended to help businesses devastated by the pandemic continue paying their staff.

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“To get larger loans for certain PPP applicants, Hockridge and her co-conspirators fabricated documents, including payroll records, tax documentation and bank statements. Hockridge and her co-conspirators also used the documents to obtain PPP loans, the Justice Department said. “In total, Hockridge and her co-conspirators obtained \$10 million in PPP loans,” the Justice Department said. “Hockridge and her co-conspirators also used the documents to obtain PPP loans,” the Justice Department said. “Hockridge and her co-conspirators also used the documents to obtain PPP loans,” the Justice Department said.

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Hockridge worked as a news anchor for ABC15, an ABC-affiliated television station in Phoenix, from 2011 to 2018, the station said.

ABC15 reported that Hockridge's defense team argued that the government's case focused on a small portion of loans, about 20 borrowers out of hundreds of thousands.

Her lawyers said they would appeal, the station reported.

Hockridge, who had faced up to 20 years in prison, will be held at Federal Prison Camp in Bryan, Texas — a minimum-security facility that houses Ghislaine Maxwell, *People* magazine reported.

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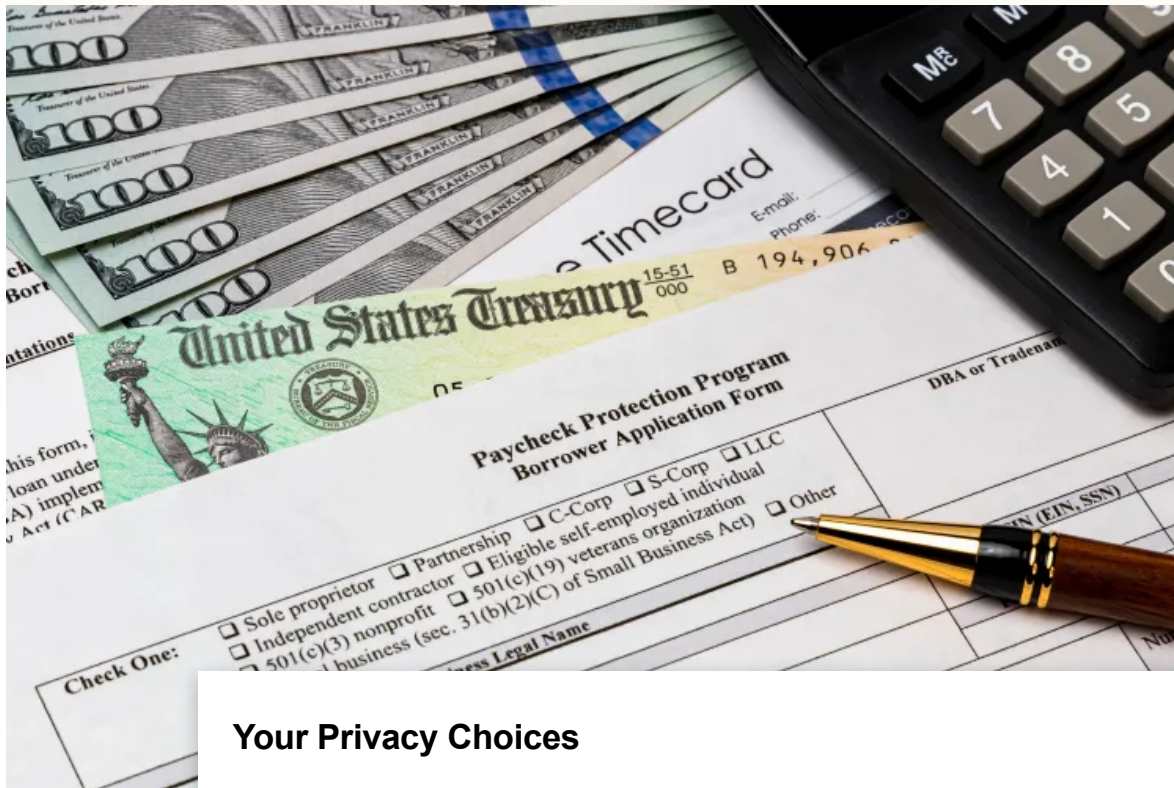
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What People Are Saying

The Justice Department said of its Criminal Division's Fraud Section: "The Fraud Section has prosecuted over 200 defendants in more than 130 criminal cases and has seized over \$78 million in cash proceeds derived from fraudulently obtained PPP funds, as well as numerous real estate properties and luxury items purchased with such proceeds."

What Happens Next

Reis, who previously pleaded guilty, is scheduled to be sentenced in December.



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