



Taken for Billions and Billions

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The U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) pandemic assistance loan programs didn't go off sans hitch.

"Over the course of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, SBA disbursed approximately \$1.2 trillion of COVID-19 Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) and Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) funds," [explains](#) a report from the SBA's Office of Inspector General. "The economic assistance was intended to help eligible small business owners and entrepreneurs adversely affected by the crisis."

You might think that \$1.2 trillion would do the job, if anything could.

But of course there was "a hitch" — it's the thing in government we are never "without."

The hitch was fraud.

"So far," [writes](#) Eric Boehm at *Reason*, "investigations into COVID-related fraud have netted 1,011 indictments, 803 arrests, and 529 convictions. The joint efforts of the SBA, U.S. Secret Service, and other federal agencies have resulted in nearly \$30 billion in COVID funds being seized or returned to SBA. . . ."

But that's not even a quarter of it. The Inspector General's report indicates that the SBA made 4.5 million loans to fraudulent recipients, and the full estimate of their loot is \$200 billion — more than 15 percent of the total.

No [mystery](#), though. "It is noteworthy that SBA executed over 14 years' worth of lending within 14 days, and this was just the beginning."

Politicians' make-believe would have us thinking they can just command things to happen and they do. "Everything is possible." Because, well, "government." Or "willpower." Or what-have-you.

Well, losing hundreds of billions is always on the table.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.