



NEWS RELEASE

Office of the New York State Welfare Inspector General
Catherine Leahy Scott – Welfare Inspector General

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WESTERN NEW YORK BUSINESS OWNER AND WIFE CHARGED WITH MORE THAN \$8,000 IN WELFARE FRAUD WHILE EARNING SIX- FIGURE INCOME

BUFFALO- New York State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott today announced the arrests of a business owner and his wife on charges that they stole more than \$8,000 in welfare benefits to which they were not entitled by concealing earning a six-figure income.

Edward L. Kwiatkowski, 77, and Sheila K. Kwiatkowski, 57, of Lyman Road, Cuba, NY, were arrested and charged with four counts of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, one count of Welfare Fraud in the Third Degree, and one count of Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, all felonies. Additionally, Edward L. Kwiatkowski was charged with one count of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree and one count of Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree, both felonies. Sheila K. Kwiatkowski was also charged with one felony count of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree.

An investigation by Inspector General Leahy Scott found that between November 1, 2012, and September 30, 2017, the Kwiatkowskis repeatedly submitted welfare program documents falsifying and concealing more than \$350,000 in income from a construction and firewood business owned by Edward Kwiatkowski. That business took in more than \$140,000 in 2015 alone while the Kwiatkowskis were fraudulently applying for and recertifying their need for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (“SNAP” also known as Food Stamps) and Home Energy Assistance Program (“HEAP”) benefits.

“The defendants’ thefts from the welfare system provided them unearned entitlements through a brazen abuse of taxpayer-subsidized benefits used to criminally enhance their lifestyle.” said **Inspector General Leahy Scott**. “I will continue to use all of the resources at my disposal to protect the public benefits system for those who truly need them while relentlessly pursuing anyone who seeks to fraudulently acquire them.”

The investigation into the Kwiatkowskis alleged thefts found that they fraudulently received \$8,817 in SNAP and HEAP program benefits. The investigation also found Edward Kwiatkowski received \$1,728 from the HEAP program to provide firewood to families in need. He never actually provided the critical heating source and ignored requests from the HEAP program to repay the \$1,728.

The Kwiatkowskis were arraigned on the charges in the Town of Amity Court and released on their own recognizance pending their reappearance in court on Sept. 26.

Inspector General Leahy Scott thanked the Allegany Department of Social Services for their assistance with the investigation, the New York State Police for their assistance with the arrest, and Allegany County District Attorney Keith A. Slep and his office for their assistance with the investigation and for the prosecution of this matter.

The defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty in a court of law.

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The New York State Office of the Welfare Inspector General investigates fraud, abuse or illegal acts committed against public assistance programs designed to help those in need. Our office also investigates complaints about the agencies and local social services districts who administer social services programs. Complaints and referrals are kept confidential. We can be reached by calling toll free: 1-800-367-4448, utilizing our online complaint form: <http://www.ig.ny.gov> or sending an email to: inspector.general@ig.ny.gov. You also can write to our office at: Office of the Welfare Inspector General, Empire State Plaza, Agency Building 2, 16th Floor Albany, New York 12223