



NEWS RELEASE

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

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SCHENECTADY WOMAN STOLE MORE THAN \$50,000 IN WELFARE BENEFITS BY CONCEALING MARRIAGE AND HER HUSBAND'S INCOME

ALBANY – New York State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott announced today the arrest of a Schenectady woman who defrauded the welfare system by more than \$50,000 by concealing the fact that she lives with and is married to the father of her three children, who is a long-tenured full-time employee at a local hospital making more than \$45,000 per year.

Victoria Bell (also known as Victoria Pacheco), 35, of Eastern Parkway, Schenectady, was charged with ten counts of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree and two counts of Welfare Fraud in the Third Degree, all felonies.

An investigation by Inspector General Leahy Scott found that since August 2012, Bell received more than \$50,000 in food stamp and Medicaid benefits to which she was not entitled. While improperly receiving those benefits, Bell repeatedly filed public benefit applications and re-certifications in which she failed to mention she lived with and was married to the father of her three children who worked full time at Schenectady's Ellis Hospital. Bell, separately, has also been earning more than \$10,000 each year working part-time in retail.

“This defendant enriched herself by repeatedly defrauding government benefit programs meant to help those who truly are most in need of financial assistance,” said **Inspector General Leahy Scott**. “I will continue to relentlessly devote the resources of my office to protect taxpayer-funded government resources.”

Bell was arraigned in Schenectady City Court and released with a return to court date of Jan. 9, 2017.

The Inspector General thanked the New York State Police for their assistance with the arrest, and Schenectady County District Attorney Robert M. Carney and his office for prosecuting this matter.

The defendant is presumed innocent until and unless found 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

