



NEWS RELEASE

From New York State Workers' Compensation Fraud Inspector General
Catherine Leahy Scott

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 18, 2015
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ELMIRA BARTENDER INDICTED BY A GRAND JURY FOR WORKERS' COMPENSATION FRAUD SCHEME

ELMIRA – New York State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott today announced the indictment of an Elmira bartender on charges he defrauded the Workers' Compensation system of nearly \$25,000.

James Hooks, Jr., 56, of Davis St., Elmira, was indicted by a Chemung County Grand jury on charges including Grand Larceny in the Third Degree and the Workers' Compensation crime of Fraudulent Practices, both felonies. He was accused of collecting \$24,584.60 in Workers' Compensation payments he was not eligible for while also working as a weekend bartender at Ramsey's Place in Elmira.

“Workers' Compensation coverage is meant to protect employees, not help them enrich themselves through fraud and deceit,” said Inspector General Leahy Scott. “I will continue to use the resources of my office to pursue anyone who abuses the Workers' Compensation system at the expense of hard-working New Yorkers.”

Under State law, employers are required to maintain Workers' Compensation coverage for their employees, and employees are expected to provide truthful information regarding their work activity to insurance carriers and the Workers' Compensation Board during the time they are receiving benefits. Workers' Compensation fraud impacts all New Yorkers, from increased insurance premiums to increased workloads for coworkers and an overall reduction in workforce productivity.

The case was presented to the grand jury and is being prosecuted by the office of Chemung County District Attorney Weeden A. Wetmore.

An investigation by Inspector General Leahy Scott found that Hooks, who sustained injuries while working at a grocery store in 1994, repeatedly told his insurance benefits company that he was not employed in any capacity when in fact he was working since at least 2013 as a bartender at Ramsey's Place on East Fifth Street in Elmira.

Hooks was arraigned today on the indicted charges and was released under the Chemung Project for Bail, Inc. program. The matter was adjourned until May 16, 2016.

Inspector General Leahy Scott thanked District Attorney Wetmore and his office for prosecuting this matter, the Elmira Police Department for assisting with the arrest and the New York State Department of Labor, the PMA Companies and the Special Funds Conservation Committee for their assistance with the investigation.

The defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty in a court of law.

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The New York State Office of the Workers' Compensation Fraud Inspector General investigates fraud, abuse and/or illegal acts against the New York State Workers' Compensation system, including fraud by medical service providers, employers seeking to evade appropriate Workers' Compensation charges, and employees who fabricate injuries to fraudulently receive system benefits. Complaints and referrals are kept confidential. We can be reached by calling toll free: 1-800-367-4448, utilizing our online complaint form at <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 Workers' Compensation Fraud Inspector General, Empire State Plaza, Agency Building 2, 16th Floor, Albany, New York 12223