



NEWS RELEASE

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

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Contact [John Milgrim](#): 518-474-1010

QUEENS MAN IMPERSONATING DECEASED TWIN BROTHER PLEADS GUILTY TO STEALING MORE THAN A HALF MILLION DOLLARS IN WELFARE BENEFITS

NEW YORK CITY – New York State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott and Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown today announced the guilty plea of a New York City sanitation worker from Queens who defrauded city, state and federal agencies of more than \$580,000 in welfare benefits from 1994 to 2013 by impersonating his deceased twin brother.

Thomas Murphy, 54, of the Rockaways in Queens, pleaded guilty to Grand Larceny in the Second Degree and Falsifying Business Records in the First Degree, both felonies. With Murphy's guilty plea, court judgements will be entered against him for the full fraud amount of the fraud.

An investigation by Inspector General Leahy Scott found Murphy committed this theft by using the social security number of his deceased twin brother, Robert, who passed away in 1962 shortly after his birth. Murphy began using his brother's social security number in October 1994, when he applied for social service benefits in his brother's name. Murphy continued to impersonate his brother for more than 18 years, and collected public benefits through November 2013.

“This defendant led a double life for nearly two decades in order to steal public assistance benefits meant for those who are truly in need,” said **Inspector General Leahy Scott**. “This public servant lived a life of lies to egregiously supplement his taxpayer-funded income with public funds to which he was not entitled. I remain committed to pursuing and bringing to justice anyone who cheats the public benefits system.”

“This was a just resolution to a complicated case. The defendant, in pleading guilty today, has admitted to posing as his deceased twin brother to obtain benefits that he was not entitled to receive,” said **District Attorney Brown**. “The defendant has taken responsibility for his actions and signed confessions of judgment promising to repay a total of \$580,000 to three different agencies. In light of the circumstances, the outcome in this case is appropriate.”

The Inspector General's investigation confirmed that Murphy was otherwise ineligible for the public benefits he received. As an employee of the New York City Department of Sanitation since 2006, Murphy earns an annual salary of approximately \$72,000 and therefore would have been unqualified to receive the benefits. Evidence obtained during this investigation uncovered an intricate plot by Murphy to ensure the continued cash-flow of fraudulently obtained public benefits.

In an effort to conceal his dual identity, Murphy – a lifelong Queens resident – maintained separate addresses

and bank accounts in both his and his deceased brother's names. Murphy also had a New York State commercial driver license, and obtained a separate driver license in his deceased brother's name. As a result of Murphy's long-term fraud he obtained a total of \$581,805.80 in public assistance benefits, as follows: \$216,481.80 from Medicaid, \$15,024 from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program ("SNAP" or food stamps), \$209,902 in state rental subsidies, and \$140,398 from the Social Security Administration ("SSA").

Murphy pleaded guilty before the Hon. Barry Schwartz of Queens County Supreme Court Criminal Term and is scheduled to return to April 4th for sentencing.

Inspector General Leahy Scott thanked the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles, the SSA and the New York City Human Resources Administration for their assistance with the investigation. She also thanked Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown and his staff for prosecuting the case.

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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