



# NEWS RELEASE

From New York State Inspector General  
**Catherine Leahy Scott**

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

## INVESTIGATION FOUND MANHATTAN DMV CLERKS PROMISING TRAFFIC TICKET DISMISSALS IN EXCHANGE FOR CASH AND TAKING PAYMENTS FOR LAWYER REFERRALS

NEW YORK CITY – New York State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott today released an [investigative report](#) finding various improprieties by clerks at the state Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) Manhattan North Traffic Violations Bureau (TVB), including taking cash from ticketed drivers in exchange for dismissing their tickets, and accepting payments from defense lawyers to whom they referred new clients. A TVB is a DMV administered facility in New York City’s five boroughs and Rochester where non-criminal traffic violations are adjudicated by administrative law judges.

The investigative report, which uncovered systemic wrongdoing at the Manhattan North TVB, has been sent to the State Joint Commission on Public Ethics (JCOPE) and the state court system’s Attorney Grievance Committee for any appropriate actions. Furthermore, recommendations by Inspector General Leahy Scott, including potential disciplinary actions, new standardized policies and additional training for TVB employees, were all accepted by DMV and implemented.

“My investigation found a Traffic Violations Bureau mired in corrupt practices, from public employees taking cash for fixing tickets to attorneys offering clerks improper payments and gifts to garner new clients, all while under woefully deficient direct oversight,” **said Inspector General Leahy Scott**. “These were routine practices at a facility where well-established policies and rules were spurned, and I am pleased the DMV has taken these issues extremely seriously with a commitment toward substantial reforms. Integrity and accountability in State facilities are paramount, and I will dedicate all of the resources necessary to expose and pursue anybody who violates that commitment.”

Inspector General Leahy Scott’s investigation found DMV clerk Sam Alexis at the TVB received up to \$600 a week on top of his DMV salary by taking between \$20 and \$100 cash from ticketed motorists in exchange for promising dismissal of their tickets. The investigation also found that clerk Alicia Eddie improperly accessed confidential information from the DMV computer system and referred ticketed motorists to Alexis in exchange for payments of \$10 each. Furthermore, the investigation revealed that Alexis, Eddie and one former clerk referred ticketed motorists to certain defense attorneys in exchange for cash or meals, often texting or calling those attorneys throughout the workday to refer ticketed motorists at the facility as potentially new clients and receiving payments in cash or meals from those lawyers in exchange.

During the investigation, Alexis testified to the Inspector General that, as a matter of routine, “If the person seems like a down-to-earth person, I’ll just tell them, ‘Look, we can take care of [the ticket] now if you want ... that this is under the books, you know what I mean.’” Other clerks testified they witnessed, were aware of, or suspected Alexis was involved in the scheme but failed to report the alleged misconduct.

The investigation found clerks would receive between \$20 and \$40, or sometimes a paid meal, for each referral

they made to certain attorneys at the TVB. Two attorneys testified to the Inspector General that they provided meals or money to TVB clerks. One admitted that he did indeed receive referrals from clerks but that the money and meals he provided to clerks were not linked to any referrals.

Inspector General Leahy Scott made several recommendations to DMV during this investigation and sent the investigative findings of the clerks' activities and attorneys' payments to the clerks to JCOPE and the State Supreme Court Appellate Division First Department's Attorney Grievance Committee for further review. The findings were also referred to DMV to take whatever disciplinary action it deems appropriate. State ethics laws prohibit State employees from soliciting or receiving gifts from interested sources, including anyone who appears before the employee's agency, and the State court system's Rules of Professional Conduct prohibit attorneys from compensating or giving anything of value to an individual who refers a client to them. The investigation was also referred for prosecution.

"I appreciate the work done by the Inspector General and her staff in this matter and am very displeased to learn about the activities described in her report, as we have no tolerance for misconduct in our offices," said **DMV Executive Deputy Commissioner Terri Egan**. "We want to assure all DMV customers that appropriate action was taken as soon as DMV learned of the investigation, to stop this sort of conduct once and for all and provide greater protections for our customers. Once again, I thank Inspector General Leahy Scott for her investigation and remain committed to continuing to work with her to ensure the policy reforms she recommended, and the accountability New Yorkers demand, remain fully ingrained throughout DMV."

The Inspector General's recommendations, all accepted and implemented by DMV, include the following:

- DMV must establish uniform policies and best practices for all TVBs and review current procedures to determine the feasibility of further limiting unsupervised conduct between clerks and attorneys.
- DMV must retrain all TVB employees on the requirements of the New York Public Officers Law and DMV policies, including the soliciting or acceptance of gifts, the unauthorized access of confidential information, appropriate interactions with attorneys conducting business at the TVBs and restrictions on the use of personal cellular telephones during business hours.
- TVB supervisors should make regular rounds of the facility to improve direct oversight of staff.
- DMV should retrain and regularly remind all staff of their obligation to report suspected fraud and abuse to the Inspector General.

A copy of the report is available [HERE](#).

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