



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

WESTERN NEW YORK BUSINESS OWNER AND WIFE SENTENCED FOR WELFARE AND HOME HEATING ASSISTANCE FRAUD WHILE EARNING SIX-FIGURE INCOME

BUFFALO- New York State Acting Welfare Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott today announced the guilty pleas of a western Southern Tier business owner and his wife who stole taxpayer-subsidized home heating aide funds and more than \$8,000 in welfare benefits to which they were not entitled by concealing their earning of a six-figure income from their construction and firewood business.

Edward L. Kwiatkowski, 77, and Sheila K. Kwiatkowski, 57, of Lyman Road, Cuba, NY, have both pleaded guilty to Welfare Fraud in the Fifth Degree in the Town of Amity Court and ordered to pay \$11,692 in restitution. Both were additionally sentenced to three years of probation.

An investigation by Acting Welfare 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 investigation also found Edward Kwiatkowski received funding from the HEAP program to provide firewood to families in need but never actually provided the critical heating source.

“These defendants’ stole from taxpayers and withheld critical heating fuel from vulnerable New Yorkers through a brazen abuse of the welfare system meant to criminally enhance their lifestyle.” said **Acting Welfare Inspector General Leahy Scott**. “I will continue to use my law enforcement partnerships and all of the resources of my office to protect the welfare system for those who truly need those benefits, and to pursue anyone who seeks to steal them.”

Acting Welfare 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.

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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