



NEWS RELEASE

From New York State Inspector General
Letizia Tagliafierro

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FORMER STATE BENEFITS SYSTEM MANAGER PLEADS GUILTY AND PAYS RESTITUTION FOR THEFT OF MORE THAN \$10,000 IN PAYROLL REIMBURSEMENT CHECKS

ALBANY – New York State Inspector General Letizia Tagliafierro today announced the guilty plea by and restitution order against a former New York State Workers’ Compensation Board district manager who stole more than \$10,000 by repeatedly cashing payroll tax reimbursement checks to which he was not entitled.

Luis Torres, 67, of Venice, FL., and formerly of Halfmoon, NY., pleaded guilty today in Schenectady City Court to larceny as a misdemeanor, was fined \$1,000, and is paying restitution to the State in the amount of \$10,121.13.

An investigation by the Offices of the Inspector General found that Torres went out on Workers’ Compensation leave for a single day in September 2017. Pursuant to tax regulations for Workers’ Compensation payments, Torres received a reimbursement check for payroll taxes withheld for that day. However, payroll tax reimbursement checks mistakenly continued to be sent to Torres each pay period for more than a year, and he continued depositing those checks, as well as his regular payroll checks, knowing he wasn’t entitled to be reimbursed for withheld taxes when he was no longer out on a Workers’ Compensation claim.

Torres, who also worked a side job as a personal tax filing specialist at a bank, received and deposited more than \$10,000 in Social Security and Medicare tax reimbursements to which he was not entitled between September 2017 and the end of December 2018. As part of the investigation Torres told investigators that while he understood he wasn’t entitled to the payments, “You don’t look a gift horse in the mouth.”

Torres retired from State service in January.

“This defendant knew full well the difference between receiving a gift and stealing, and his actions were nothing short of flagrant thefts,” said **Inspector General Tagliafierro**. “This case sends a clear message that the Offices of the Inspector General and our law enforcement partners will not stand aside for such a clear violation of the public trust.”

Inspector General Tagliafierro 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 case.

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