



The City of New York  
Department of Investigation  
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**HUSBAND AND WIFE ARE CHARGED IN THEFTS OF \$94,000 IN HOUSING AND OTHER BENEFITS**

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), announced today the arrests of a Staten Island couple who posed as landlord and tenant, concealed income, and illegally obtained more than \$94,000 in Section 8, Medicaid, and food stamp subsidies, according to the criminal complaint. The husband earned up to \$104,000 per year as a bus driver for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority ("MTA") and owns the two-family home where the couple resides together. They are charged with fraudulently collecting \$60,000 in Section 8 rent subsidies by listing the wife as a tenant in the house and failing to report the husband's presence and income. The wife is also charged with stealing an additional \$34,000 in food stamp and Medicaid benefits. Today's arrests are the result of a joint investigation by DOI, the New York / New Jersey Region of the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of the Inspector General ("HUD OIG"), and the New York State Office of the Welfare Inspector General. The office of Preet Bharara, United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, is prosecuting the case.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "The defendants fraudulently arranged for the government to pay them to live in their own home, according to the complaint. The scarce public housing funds they are charged with stealing should have been helping a needy family, not subsidizing their real estate investment."

HUD OIG Special Agent in Charge Cary Rubenstein said, "One of the primary missions of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development ("the Department") is to provide safe and decent housing for those low to moderate income individuals and families who otherwise would have a difficult time finding housing that meets their needs. The Department depends on individuals receiving rental assistance to provide truthful information about their income and family composition. The Department also depends on private landlords to obey to the terms of their contract. When the Department learns of corrupt and greedy behavior, such as those allegedly committed by Maria Almanzar and David Vale, the Office of Inspector General will vigorously pursue any and all actions in order to maintain the integrity of our low to moderate income housing assistance programs. We want to thank DOI and the New York State Office of the Welfare Inspector General, for their outstanding assistance in this joint endeavor. We also would like to thank the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York for their continued efforts in prosecuting individuals whose criminal conduct has placed a significant burden on the well intentioned programs of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development."

NYS Welfare Inspector General Sean Courtney said, "I thank our partners in law enforcement for closely working together to put a stop to the defendants' greedy and gratuitous grab of social/human services benefits--benefits intended for those, unlike the defendants, who are truly in need. These defendants are examples of the worst kind of "double-dipping" from the public's wallet: taking public assistance benefits to which they were not entitled while collecting, and concealing, a public servant's salary and generous benefits."

MARIA ALMANZAR, 41, and DAVID VALE, 55, of Staten Island, were arrested today and charged with Theft of Government Funds, a federal felony, which upon conviction is punishable by up to 10 years in prison. VALE is charged with one count, relating to \$60,000 in Section 8 subsidies; ALMANZAR is also charged with that count and with two additional counts involving food stamp and Medicaid benefits totaling \$34,000.

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According to the criminal complaint, between October 2007 and October 2011, ALMANZAR failed to report to the City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (“HPD”), which administers federally funded Section 8 subsidies, that VALE resided with her in the second floor apartment at 91 Elizabeth Street in Staten Island and failed to report his portion of their household income. The investigation determined that VALE owns the two-family house and collected rent from three tenants on the first floor. In 2006 VALE applied to participate in the Section 8 program as ALMANZAR’S landlord but did not report that they lived together. According to the criminal complaint, VALE listed his Elizabeth Street address on his driver’s license, tax returns, and other records. In addition, VALE received wages of up to \$104,698 between 2006 and 2011 and additional rental income. As a result of their various misrepresentations, the investigation found, the defendants illegally obtained approximately \$60,000 in Section 8 subsidies between October 2007 and October 2011. The investigation also found that ALMANZAR failed to report to the City Human Resources Administration (“HRA”) that VALE was a member of her household. As a result, ALMANZAR illegally obtained more than \$9,000 in federally funded food stamp benefits and more than \$25,000 in federally funded Medicaid benefits from HRA, which administers those subsidies.

Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked Preet Bharara, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York; Cary Rubenstein, Special Agent in Charge of the New York / New Jersey Region of the HUD OIG; Sean Courtney, Inspector General of the New York State Office of the Welfare Inspector General; Mathew M. Wambua, HPD Commissioner; and Robert Doar, HRA Commissioner, and their staffs, for their assistance and cooperation in this investigation.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Edward A. Imperatore of the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York is assigned to the prosecution of this case.

The investigation was conducted by DOI’s Office of the Inspector General for HPD, the HUD OIG, and the New York State Office of the Welfare Inspector General.

A criminal complaint is an accusation. Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

*DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country. The agency investigates and refers for prosecution City employees and contractors engaged in corrupt or fraudulent activities or unethical conduct. Investigations may involve any agency, officer, elected official or employee of the City, as well as those who do business with or receive benefits from the City.*

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