



Department of Investigation

Press Releases

ADOI & NYS Welfare IG Arrest Legal Secretary For \$10,000 Welfare Fraud

Release #006-2000

TUESDAY, JANUARY 25, 2000 -- EDWARD J. KURIANSKY, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), and PAUL BALUKAS, New York State Welfare Inspector General, today announced the felony arrest of VIOLETTA HUNT for stealing more than \$10,000 in public assistance benefits while employed as a legal secretary for a Manhattan attorney.

Commissioner Kuriansky and Inspector General Balukas noted that a joint investigation was initiated when their offices each received a copy of a complaint alleging that HUNT was unlawfully collecting welfare benefits while working as a legal secretary, earning \$20 an hour.

The investigation revealed that, from January 1997 through October 1998, HUNT, using her married name of Violetta Bell, was employed as a legal secretary to an attorney in private practice in Manhattan. During this period, it is alleged, the defendant used her maiden name of VIOLETTA HUNT to fraudulently receive welfare benefits from the City's Human Resources Administration's (HRA) Waverly Job Center in Manhattan.

The investigation further disclosed that, on 4 separate occasions between January 1997 and October 1998, HUNT attended "recertification" interviews at the Waverly Job Center in connection with her welfare case. At each interview, HUNT intentionally failed to disclose her employment income, and completed and submitted documents in which she falsely indicated she was not employed. As a result, from January 1997 through October 1998, HUNT illegally received \$10,041 in welfare benefits.

HUNT, 47, of 310 Greenwich Street in Manhattan, has been charged with 1 count of Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, 1 count of Welfare Fraud in the Third Degree, and 4 counts of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree. If convicted, she faces up to 7 years in prison.

The investigation was conducted jointly by Gerard Hoey, DOI's Inspector General for HRA, and IG Balukas. Assisting in the investigation were DOI Deputy Inspector General Benjamin Defibaugh, DOI Chief Investigator Emanuel Lane, and Andrew J. Weiss, Special Counsel to the Welfare Inspector General.

The Office of New York State Attorney General Eliot L. Spitzer is prosecuting the case. Pasqualino Russo, Counsel to the Welfare Inspector General, is prosecuting as Special Assistant Attorney General.