



# Department of Investigation

## *Press Release*

**Release #018-2001**

**FRIDAY, MAY 4, 2001**

### **DOI ARRESTS LONG ISLAND WOMAN IN \$2,500 BAIL REFUND SCAM**

EDWARD J. KURIANSKY, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), today announced the felony arrest of REINA ESPINAL, a West Babylon, New York, resident, for attempting to steal \$2,500 bail posted for her son by her daughter-in-law by filing a forged letter with the City Department of Finance (DOF) fraudulently requesting that the bail money be refunded instead to her.

According to Commissioner Kuriansky, DOF's Bureau of Treasury disburses refunds to individuals who have posted cash bail for defendants, once their cases are complete. He noted that about 2,000 bail refund checks are issued each month, and that about \$41 million in bail refund checks were disbursed last year.

Commissioner Kuriansky said that an investigation began last July when DOF alerted DOI to a suspicious letter purportedly authorizing reassignment of a bail refund to ESPINAL.

The June 2, 2000 letter, supposedly written and signed by ESPINAL's daughter-in-law, requested that DOF refund the \$2,500 bail she had posted for her husband in a 1998 Queens drug case, and asked that the check be made payable to ESPINAL and mailed to ESPINAL's home at 715 Albin Avenue in West Babylon, New York.

The investigation revealed, however, that it was ESPINAL who had submitted the bogus letter to DOF and also signed an official DOF form falsely verifying that the letter's signature was her daughter-in-law's and that she wanted the bail reassigned to ESPINAL. The daughter-in-law who had actually posted the \$2,500 bail told DOI investigators that she had not written or signed the letter to DOF and had not authorized her bail refund check to go to ESPINAL.

ESPINAL, 50, of 715 Albin Avenue in West Babylon, New York, a factory worker, has been charged with Forgery in the Second Degree, a Class D felony, and Attempted Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, a Class E felony. If convicted, she faces up to 7 years in prison.

Commissioner Kuriansky expressed his sincere appreciation to DOF Commissioner Andrew S. Eristoff and members of his staff for their assistance and cooperation in the investigation.

The investigation was conducted by Vincent E. Green, DOI Assistant Commissioner and Inspector General for

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DOF, and members of his staff, including Deputy Inspector General Maureen A. Thomas, Special Investigators Jeffrey Dolcimascolo and Belarminia Ortiz, and Investigative Auditor Philip Littrean.

The case will be prosecuted by the Office of Manhattan District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau.