



The City of New York  
Department of Investigation

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**DOI ARRESTS TWO CITY HRA EMPLOYEES ON CHARGES OF  
FALSIFYING INCOME STATEMENTS TO OBTAIN HOUSING SUBSIDIES**

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), announced today the arrests of New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) employees SHEILA BURNS and VICTORIA BUTLER. Both employees are charged in separate cases with falsifying documents to understate their income and obtain from the City's Housing Development Corporation (HDC) housing subsidies for which they were ineligible. Their arrests, yesterday, are the latest results of DOI's self-initiated effort to determine whether City employees who apply for housing subsidies through HDC are providing truthful information regarding their income. Since November 2007, DOI has arrested five HRA employees for allegedly falsifying such information.

BURNS, 40, of Brooklyn, has been charged with Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, Forgery in the Second Degree, and Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Second Degree, all class D felonies, Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree and Falsifying Business Records in the First Degree, both class E Felonies, and several related misdemeanors. If convicted, she faces up to seven years in prison.

BUTLER, 37, of the Bronx, has been charged with Forgery in the Second Degree, a class D felony, and Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, a class E felony. If convicted, she faces up to seven years in prison.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "DOI is actively targeting fraud by City employees who falsify applications and forge letters to hide income and obtain excessive housing subsidies from the HDC and other public agencies. All City employees know that such conduct is wrong. These arrests illustrate that it is also very foolish, because DOI investigators are watching, and when they find the false documents, the consequences may include arrest, criminal prosecution, and a prison sentence."

Commissioner Gill Hearn said that DOI investigators have been comparing HDC records with City payroll records, identifying City employees who receive housing subsidies, examining their applications and income-verification documents to determine their accuracy and authenticity, and interviewing the employees and others to ascertain the facts.

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## SHEILA BURNS

According to Commissioner Gill Hearn, since November 2005, SHEILA BURNS has held a clerical position with HRA, where her annual salary is now \$28,368, and she has also received rental subsidies, through HDC, from the federal Section 8 program, based in part on her income. The criminal complaint charges that in February 2006, BURNS gave her landlord's property manager a forged letter supposedly issued by her former employer, falsely reporting that she was employed there and that her annual income was only \$7,800, when in fact she was then employed by HRA at a salary of \$26,742. According to the complaint, BURNS also submitted a second forged letter from her former employer falsely reporting that her income was only \$4,000. As a result of BURNS'S false income reports, the complaint charges, from November 2005 through January 2007, she collected \$6,698 more in Section 8 housing benefits than she should have received.

Commissioner Gill Hearn said that Section 8 is a federal program that helps people with low incomes pay for housing in the private market. Through the program, a participating tenant receives a monthly housing subsidy that is paid directly to the tenant's landlord, and the tenant pays the difference between the subsidy and the full monthly rent amount. The amount of the subsidy depends in part on the tenant's income. In this case, HDC was administering the program for the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development.

## VICTORIA BUTLER

Commissioner Gill Hearn said that VICTORIA BUTLER has worked at HRA since 2001 and earns an annual income of approximately \$37,000 as an Eligibility Specialist. The criminal complaint charges that in August 2006 and July 2007, BUTLER intentionally omitted child-support and other income information from three applications for low-income housing that she submitted to City agencies, two to HDC and one to the City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD). With her application to HPD, BUTLER is also charged with forging and submitting two letters supposedly issued by the Executive Director of the New York City Employees Retirement System.

## OTHER CASES

The arrests announced today bring to five the number of HRA employees arrested by DOI in the past five months for alleged fraud against an HDC-administered housing program. The three previous DOI arrests are the following:

- On November 30, 2007, HRA employee EVELYN MEDAL was charged with the theft of approximately \$41,000 in Section 8 housing subsidies administered by HDC between 2003 and 2007. According to the criminal complaint, MEDAL falsely reported her income and employment to HDC. This case is being prosecuted by the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York.
- On January 10, 2008, HRA employee JEAN BOWLES was charged with theft of Section 8 funds for allegedly receiving housing subsidies between 2001 and 2007 in excess of \$1,000 to which she was not entitled. This case is also being prosecuted by the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York.
- On January 18, 2008, HRA employee SIMEON SIYANBOLA was charged with falsifying his income and forging his supervisor's signature to qualify for a low-income apartment developed through another HDC program. This case is being prosecuted by the Office of New York County District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau.

Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked HDC President Marc Jahr and HRA Commissioner Robert Doar and their staffs for their assistance and cooperation in these investigations.

These investigations were conducted by HDC Inspector General Joseph P. Piazza, Special Counsel Catherine Riccards, and Chief Investigator Belarminia Ortiz, with the assistance of Anthony DeLeo, Supervising Chief Investigator, under the supervision of Pat Russo, Inspector General for DOI's Public Assistance and Grants Unit.

The Office of the Kings County District Attorney Charles J. Hynes is prosecuting the case against BURNS, and the Office of New York County District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau, is prosecuting the case against BUTLER, which is assigned to Assistant District Attorney Noam Neeman.

Criminal complaints and indictments are accusations. 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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