

A.G. Schneiderman Announces Guilty Pleas Of Westchester County Residents For Stealing Over \$69,000 In Unemployment Benefits

Defendants Faked Documentation To Twice Obtain Unemployment Benefits

ALBANY – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced the guilty pleas of Dennis Broccolo, 55 of New Rochelle and Stephanie Vega, 27 of New Rochelle, on felony charges stemming from the theft of over \$69,000 in unemployment benefits. The defendants were each accused of twice submitting false applications for unemployment insurance benefits by claiming to have worked for two different companies at which they were never employed.

“Theft of unemployment benefits is a serious crime and today’s guilty pleas will ensure that justice is served and that restitution is made to taxpayers,” said Attorney General Schneiderman. “Unemployment insurance offers an important safety net for New Yorkers when they are out of a job and I will continue to work with partners in government to protect the program from abuse.”

“The New York State Department of Labor remains committed to protecting the integrity of the Unemployment Insurance system,” said Acting Labor Commissioner Roberta Reardon. “When criminals defraud the system, it hurts both businesses who pay into the trust fund and claimants who depend on benefits during a difficult time. I applaud the ongoing efforts of the Labor Department investigators who track down fraudsters and I thank Attorney General Schneiderman and his team for once again proving themselves allies in our shared effort to combat Unemployment Insurance fraud.”

Today in court, both defendants admitted that they submitted fraudulent papers with the Department of Labor to obtain unemployment insurance benefits. Defendant Vega admitted that she was part of a scam to illegally obtain unemployment insurance benefits.

The defendants falsely claimed to have worked for Bassa Iripinia Corporation when both applied for unemployment benefits in October 2012. In support of their claims, both Broccolo and Vega also submitted false documents.

After Broccolo and Vega received the maximum allowable benefits under the October 2012 claims, in November, 2014, Broccolo and Vega again applied for unemployment insurance benefits, this time claiming they worked for Drakemain Café & Lounge. In support of their claims, both Broccolo and Vega again submitted false documents.

The theft of unemployment insurance benefits occurred between October 3, 2012 and May 31, 2015.

Broccolo pleaded guilty before the Honorable Thomas J. Breslin in Albany County Court on two counts of Grand Larceny in the Third Degree in full satisfaction of the indictment. In exchange for a plea to a lesser count of the Indictment, Broccolo will be sentenced to 3 1/2 to 7 years in prison and will pay full restitution. Vega also pleaded guilty before Judge Breslin to one count of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree. In exchange for her plea, Vega also agreed to pay full restitution and is expected to be sentenced to one year interim probation, after which Judge Breslin will consider whether she should continue to serve probation for up to 5 years.

Broccolo and Vega's sentencing is scheduled for March 17, 2016.

The case was being prosecuted by Assistant Attorney General Bridget Holohan Scally of the Public Integrity Bureau. The Public Integrity Bureau is led by Bureau Chief Daniel Cort and Deputy Bureau Chief Stacy Aronowitz. The investigation was conducted by Investigator Mitch Paurowski of the Investigations Bureau, Investigator Michelle Martone of the New York State Department of Labor's Office of Special Investigations, with assistance provided by Forensic Auditor Meagan Scovello and Legal Support Analyst Sara Pogorzelski. The Attorney General's Office thanks the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, and the Office of Labor Racketeering and Fraud Investigations for their work on the case. The Attorney General's Investigations Bureau is led by Bureau Chief Dominick Zarrella and Deputy Bureau Chief Antoine Karam. The Criminal Division is led by Executive Deputy Attorney General for Criminal Justice Kelly Donovan.