



STATE OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE STATE INSPECTOR GENERAL
Final Report
October 15, 2008

DMV CLERK FIRED AFTER FAKE ID PROSECUTION

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS/RECOMMENDATIONS

An investigation by the New York State Inspector General's office conducted jointly with the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) Division of Field Investigations determined that Latasha Colbert, a part-time clerk at the Erie County Auto Bureau, issued fraudulent New York State non-driver identifications in exchange for cash. She was arrested after she agreed to change the date of birth on an undercover agent's identification in exchange for \$100. Subsequently, Colbert was terminated from employment and pleaded guilty to five counts of Bribe Receiving in the Third Degree, class D felonies.

ALLEGATIONS

On December 6, 2007, the DMV Division of Field Investigations referred to the Inspector General an allegation that DMV clerk Latasha Colbert provided a 14-year-old girl with a New York State DMV identification card under another name and date of birth in exchange for \$50. The girl's family had reported the allegation to the DMV.

SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATION

The Inspector General's review of the relevant DMV records showed that Latasha Colbert, a part-time clerk at the Erie County Auto Bureau, processed an "Application for Driver License or Non-Driver ID Card" November 29, 2007, with the 14-year-old's photograph but the pedigree information of another woman. DMV records also revealed that Colbert amended the birth date on the identification of a 19-year-old girl on the same day.

On January 9, 2008, the Inspector General and the DMV Division of Field Investigations, assisted by the New York State Police, conducted an undercover operation at the DMV office in Buffalo, NY. On that day, Colbert was working at a window station. A DMV undercover agent offered Colbert money to change her date of birth. Colbert agreed to do so for \$100 plus the \$10 DMV fee. The undercover agent paid her and Colbert amended the identification. The undercover agent did not show a birth certificate, nor did Colbert ask to see one.

At the end of Colbert's shift, the Inspector General and the Division of Field Investigations interviewed Colbert. Colbert acknowledged that DMV requires her to verify any changes to the date of birth of an identification card by reviewing an original copy of the customer's birth certificate, with a seal of authenticity. Colbert stated that she always verifies amendments in this manner.

When asked about the transaction with the undercover agent, Colbert initially stated that she verified the date of birth amendment by observing the agent's original birth certificate. After investigators informed her that the agent did not produce a birth certificate, Colbert admitted that the woman told her she did not have a birth certificate. Colbert also admitted that she accepted \$100, plus \$10 for the DMV fee, to process the transaction. Colbert produced \$70 of the \$100 given to her by the undercover agent. She explained that she had owed \$30 to her cousin, who came to the DMV to get the money during the day.

Colbert admitted to creating the fraudulent license for the 14-year-old girl and altering the license of the 19-year old girl. Colbert stated that she altered the licenses for money in late 2007 at the request of a friend named Anthony Thompson. Colbert said that Thompson asked her create identifications for the two girls indicating that they were 21 so that the girls could dance in strip clubs. The girls worked for Thompson as prostitutes. Colbert admitted that she changed the date of birth on the 19-year-old's license, and created a false identity for the 14-year-old girl, using the girl's picture but the information of another woman, provided by Thompson. Thompson paid Colbert \$100 for these transactions.

Colbert denied issuing fraudulent DMV identification in exchange for money on any other occasions. However, during the course of investigation, the Division of Field Investigations located and interviewed another woman who reported that she paid Colbert on two occasions in December 2006 to process fraudulent identification papers for her.

This matter was referred to the Erie County District Attorney's Office. Colbert was arrested in January and subsequently indicted on eighteen felony counts related to this investigation. On August 21, 2008 Colbert pleaded guilty to five counts of Bribe Receiving in the Third Degree, class D felonies, and admitted to each of the transactions uncovered during the investigation.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The investigation determined that Colbert issued fraudulent New York State non-driver identifications in exchange for cash. The Erie County Clerk's Office terminated Colbert, and subsequently Colbert pleaded guilty to five counts of Bribe Receiving in the Third Degree, class D felonies.