



NEWS

From the Office of the New York State Inspector General
Joseph Fisch

Contact: Kate Gurnett
Press Office, (518) 474-1010

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 20, 2008

[View Report](#)

State typist swipes \$2,450 check after spotting typo *Payment due state was only \$24.50*

A State Division of Human Rights employee was arrested after she admitted cashing a \$2,450 check made out to the agency in an erroneous overpayment of a \$24.50 fee, the New York State Inspector General announced Tuesday.

Michelle Griffin, 41, a keyboard specialist earning \$31,741 per year, was charged with grand larceny in the fourth degree and criminal possession of a forged instrument in the second degree, both felonies. The Bronx District Attorney is prosecuting the case.

Griffin, who processes Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) payments at the Division of Human Rights' Bronx office, spotted a typographical error in a check submitted by the Rochester law firm of Pirrello, Missal, Personte & Feder. Instead of paying a copying fee of \$24.50, the firm mistakenly wrote a check for \$2,450. The Pirrello law firm discovered the error when it reconciled its bank statements, then contacted DHR, which notified the Inspector General.

The Inspector General's office determined that Griffin, a 21-year employee, made herself the payee and cashed the check on Nov. 2, 2007 at Cash Transactions Inc., a private check-cashing business near her Bronx office. Griffin, who has no prior record, told investigators that she was in debt for several thousand dollars, and when she spotted the lucrative typo, she decided to cash the check. Investigators found a copy of her state ID card photocopied on the back of the check.

The Division of Human Rights has reimbursed the Pirrello law firm \$2,450, minus the proper FOIL records fee of \$24.50. Griffin, who has been on unpaid leave since late 2007, turned herself in Tuesday. In addition to the criminal charges, Griffin faces

employee discipline. The Division of Human Rights is seeking restitution for the \$2,450.

“This case poses a warning to other state employees who might seek to take advantage of their public position,” Inspector General Joseph Fisch said. “Not only is Ms. Griffin being prosecuted, she has forfeited a 21-year career in state service.”

###