



## Department of Investigation

### *Press Release*

Release #037-2000

### *DOI Arrests Queens Father & Son For Bribing Housing Inspector*

**TUESDAY, MAY 23, 2000** -- EDWARD J. KURIANSKY, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), today announced the felony arrest of FILIPPO DIGIOVANNA, a Queens apartment building owner, and his father, GASPARE DIGIOVANNA, for paying \$110 in bribes to a City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) inspector who was cooperating in a DOI undercover investigation. The payoffs were allegedly in return for removing the building's pending housing code violations from City records.

Commissioner Kuriansky said, "This arrest is part of DOI's ongoing effort to deter municipal corruption and should serve as a fair warning to any citizen who might even be tempted to bribe a City worker. In this case, the HPD employee who initially received the bribe offer immediately reported it to DOI. His actions are to be commended. He represents the overwhelming majority of good, honest, and decent City employees."

According to Commissioner Kuriansky, DOI began an investigation in March when an HPD code enforcement inspector reported that, during a routine inspection of a 3-story, 6-unit apartment building at 413 Onderdonk Avenue in Ridgewood, Queens, he was offered \$100 by the owner, FILIPPO DIGIOVANNA, to remove all existing housing code violations against the building from City records. The inspector declined the money and immediately reported the incident to DOI.

Thereafter, on March 14, DOI sent another HPD inspector, wearing a concealed recording device, to conduct a re-inspection of an apartment in the Onderdonk Avenue building. During the inspection, FILIPPO DIGIOVANNA allegedly handed the inspector \$70, and GASPARE DIGIOVANNA allegedly handed the inspector \$40 -- a total of \$110 in cash -- to remove all of the property's pending violations. The most serious of the violations included rusted fire escapes, broken and defective smoke alarms, and insufficient lighting in the public hallways.

FILIPPO DIGIOVANNA, 25, and GASPARE DIGIOVANNA, 55, both of whom reside at 60-90 Putnam Avenue, Ridgewood, Queens, were each charged with Bribery in the Third Degree, a Class D felony, and Rewarding Official Misconduct in the Second Degree, a Class E felony. If convicted, each faces up to 7 years in prison.

Commissioner Kuriansky expressed his sincere appreciation to HPD Commissioner Richard T. Roberts and his staff for their assistance and cooperation in the investigation.

The investigation was conducted by Brian D. Foley, DOI's Inspector General for HPD, and members of his staff, including Special Investigator John Bavuso and Confidential Investigator Dana Fraser.

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The Office of Queens County District Attorney Richard A. Brown is prosecuting the case. Assistant District Attorney Yvonne Creque is handling the matter.

Members of the public are reminded that a complaint is merely an accusation and is not evidence of guilt. Every defendant is presumed innocent and is entitled to a fair trial in which it is the government's burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.