



**UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE**  
*Southern District of New York*

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**FORMER NYPD SERGEANT PLEADS GUILTY TO 9/11 BENEFITS FRAUD**

Audrey Strauss, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced today that SALLY SPINOSA pled guilty in Manhattan federal court to one count of theft of public money related to her false application for benefits related to the attack on New York on September 11, 2001. SPINOSA pled guilty before U.S. District Judge Paul A. Engelmayer.

U.S. Attorney Audrey Strauss said: "As she has now admitted, Sally Spinosa stole money for programs intended to benefit the brave men and women of the NYPD, and first-responders across the city, who were injured in the rescue and recovery efforts following September 11, 2001. She did so by repeatedly lying about the time she spent in the rescue and recovery effort, and will now face the consequences of such brazen lies."

According to the allegations in the Complaint, court filings, and statements during court proceedings:

Following the attacks on New York and Washington, D.C., on September 11, 2001, Congress created certain programs to provide monetary compensation and medical treatment for victims of the attacks. Specifically, Congress created the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund (the "VCF") to provide compensation for any individual who suffered physical harm or was killed as a result of either the September 11th attacks or the debris removal and recovery efforts that took place in the immediate aftermath of the attacks. Congress also created the World Trade Center Health Program ("WTCHP") to provide, among other things, monitoring and medical treatment benefits for individuals who have or may develop health conditions due to exposure at disaster or recovery sites tied to the September 11th attacks. Both the VCF and the WTCHP are funded by Congress. An individual can be deemed eligible for a VCF award either by submitting medical documents and proof-of-presence documents directly to the VCF, or by going through the WTCHP's process for having a medical condition certified.

SALLY SPINOSA served as an NYPD officer from in or about July 1986 until July 2019, and was a sergeant in the investigations unit of the NYPD's Patrol Services Bureau of Staten Island (the "Staten Island Investigations Unit") on September 11, 2001. In 2010,

SPINOSA participated in a screening interview with the WTCHP in which she falsely stated that she worked for hundreds of hours at the Fresh Kills Landfill in Staten Island, New York (the “Landfill”), from September 2001 to June 2002. Similarly, in 2014, SPINOSA applied for a monetary award from the VCF, falsely claiming that she was at the Landfill for two hours each day for 62 straight days from September 20, 2001, to November 20, 2001. In support of her application, SPINOSA submitted proof-of-presence documents, including an affidavit purportedly signed by one of her supervisors at the Staten Island Investigations Unit (“Officer-1”) stating that Officer-1 frequently visited the Landfill with SPINOSA to supervise subordinates (the “Officer-1 Affidavit”).

However, contrary to SPINOSA’s representations to the WTCHP and the VCF, in fact SPINOSA spent little to no time at the Landfill. Indeed, during much of the time SPINOSA claimed to be working at the Landfill, SPINOSA was pregnant and doing limited work outside the Staten Island Investigations Unit’s offices, or was out of the office entirely on parental leave. Moreover, the Officer-1 Affidavit that SPINOSA submitted in support of her VCF application was fraudulent and was never signed by Officer-1.

Nevertheless, and based on her false and fraudulent misrepresentations, in or around 2017 the WTCHP granted her benefits. The WTCHP has since paid for certain medical visits and prescription drugs for SPINOSA. While SPINOSA’s original fraudulent application to the VCF was denied in 2014, she reapplied in 2017 and 2018 relying on the same false and fraudulent information. SPINOSA’s VCF claim remains pending.

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SPINOSA, 55, of Freehold, New Jersey, pled guilty to one count of theft of public money, which carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison. The maximum potential sentence in this case is prescribed by Congress and is provided here for informational purposes only, as the defendant’s sentence will be determined by the judge.

SPINOSA is scheduled to be sentenced by Judge Engelmayer on December 1, 2021, at 10:30 a.m.

Ms. Strauss praised the investigative work of the NYPD’s Internal Affairs Bureau and DOJ-OIG.

This case is being handled by the Office’s Public Corruption Unit. Assistant United States Attorneys Kedar S. Bhatia and Catherine E. Ghosh are in charge of the prosecution.

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