



# Office of the Inspector General

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

## Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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<http://oig.ssa.gov>

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### New York City Man Sentenced for Stealing Deceased Father's Social Security, Pension Payments

A New York City man was sentenced yesterday to time served and full restitution for failing to claim his deceased father's body from a New York morgue for more than a year and collecting his father's Social Security and State pension payments.

Christopher Bunn, 49, of Queens, collected more than \$25,000 intended for his deceased father, James Bunn. His sentencing was based on his October 2014 guilty plea of grand larceny and petit larceny in Queens County Supreme Court. Bunn also agreed to repay the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the New York State Pension System. In June 2015, because Bunn had not made restitution, he was ordered to prison until he repaid both agencies. Bunn made full restitution yesterday.

"Concealing a family member's death from Social Security and other government agencies and collecting the deceased's benefit payments is an intolerable offense," said Edward J. Ryan, Special Agent-in-Charge of the SSA Office of the Inspector General's (OIG) New York Field Division. "Our office will continue to pursue all forms of Social Security fraud, including deceased payee fraud."

James Bunn, 77, died in February 2010 of natural causes in a parked car in Nassau County, New York. The Nassau County Medical Examiner's Office notified Christopher Bunn several times about his father's death, but he repeatedly failed to claim his father's body, so a death certificate was not filed for James Bunn.

In May 2011, the Nassau County Medical Examiner's Office contacted the OIG because of concerns that SSA had no record of James Bunn's death. The OIG investigation determined that Christopher Bunn had access to his father's bank account, and from April 2010 to May 2011, he collected \$17,790 in Social Security benefits intended for his father. The OIG also worked with the New York State Comptroller's Office to determine that Christopher Bunn collected \$7,541 from the New York State Pension System intended for his father. The OIG and New York State Police arrested Bunn in October 2011.

"This was a very disturbing case in which the defendant left his father's body unclaimed in a morgue for well over a year following his death in order to continue receiving his father's Social Security and pension payments," said Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown.

*For more information, please contact Tracy Lynge, OIG Communications Director, at (410) 965-2671.*



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Brown added that it was only this month that James Bunn, a retired New York City Police Sergeant who had been buried for four years in an anonymous grave, received a proper burial and grave marker thanks to the efforts of the Queens District Attorney's Office and the New York City Police Department's Sergeants Benevolent Association. "Justice has been achieved in this case, and Sergeant Bunn and his family members finally have the closure they deserve."

Citizens can report suspected Social Security fraud to the Social Security Fraud Hotline at <http://oig.ssa.gov/report>, or by phone at (800) 269-0271, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (those who are deaf or hard-of-hearing may call TTY (866) 501-2101.)

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