

Department of Justice

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Western District of New York

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JANUARY 11, 2012
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NORTH TONAWANDA WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO THEFT OF GOVERNMENT MONEY

BUFFALO, N.Y.— U.S. Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr. Announced today that Maureen Riley-Holka, 53 of North Tonawanda, N.Y., pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Richard J. Arcara, to theft of government money. The charge carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison, a fine of \$250,000, or both.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Aaron J. Mango, who is handling the case, stated that the defendant's father, a former coal miner, received Federal Black Lung Benefits until his death in February 1994. The Black Lung Benefits Act provides benefits to coal miners who are totally disabled by black lung disease, and to their eligible survivors. Holka's mother was eligible to continue receiving benefits after her husband's death. After the defendant's mother died in July 2006, Holka filed certifications with the U.S. Department of Labor in 2007 and 2008 that her mother was still eligible for benefits. As a result, the defendant continued to receive and cash monthly benefit checks issued in her mother's name. An audit in December 2009 by the Labor Department revealed that Holka's mother had died in 2006. The defendant received a total of 35 monthly checks totaling \$20,729.90 to which she was not entitled.

The plea is the culmination of an investigation on the part of Special Agents of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, under the direction of Acting Inspector General, Daniel R. Petrole.

Sentencing is scheduled for April 30, 2012, at 12:30 p.m. EST, in Buffalo, NY before Judge Arcara.