

Attorney General James Recovers More Than \$1.6 Million from Government Contractor That Skimmed Funds from State Public-Works Projects

V.J. Associates Inc. of Suffolk Padded Hours on Public-Works Projects in New York, Massachusetts, and New Jersey

NEW YORK – New York Attorney General Letitia James today announced the [recovery of \\$1,875,000 — \\$1,658,020 of which will go to New York state — from V.J. Associates Inc. of Suffolk and its affiliates \(VJA\) for falsely inflating bills for cost estimating and scheduling services on public-works projects in New York, Massachusetts, and New Jersey.](#)

“We demand contractors taking on public-works projects in the state of New York and billing our state to act with the highest levels of honesty,” said **Attorney General James**. “V.J. Associates padded hours and bilked our state’s taxpayers out of hundreds of thousands of dollars for hours they never worked. Not only are we now recovering the ill-gotten gains of these fraudsters, but we are ensuring that V.J. Associates cannot bid on or be awarded another public-works contract with the state for at least five years. New Yorkers can always rely on my office to fight to protect their tax dollars.”

The Hicksville, New York-based companies performed services as subcontractors to prime contractors on public works projects for the Metropolitan Transit Authority, Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, New York City’s School Construction Authority, and other government entities throughout New York, Massachusetts, and New Jersey.

“Riders and taxpayers have a right to know that unscrupulous contractors will not rip off hard-earned tax dollars and fares dedicated to our public transportation system,” said **MTA Inspector General Carolyn Pokorny**. “Executives at V.J. Associates padded their invoices to the MTA in a failed attempt to steal precious dollars from New Yorkers. I am grateful to our law enforcement partners at the New York attorney general’s office and pleased these individuals have been held accountable.”

VJA performed these services under two types of contracts: time-and-expense contracts (under which VJA was paid for the hours it claimed its employees worked) and fixed-fee contracts.

From January 1, 2013 through August 29, 2018, VJA submitted false bills to the prime contractors on certain time-and-expense public works projects where VJA employees worked from a VJA office rather than on-site, at government offices. The bills VJA submitted falsely billed for more hours on projects than its employees actually worked. Specifically, VJA overbilled for hours that its employees worked on unrelated, fixed-fee projects; hours that its employees spent performing administrative tasks unrelated to the projects for which they were billing; and hours that were excessive and unnecessary.

As part of this agreement, VJA admitted to submitting false bills and also agreed to be debarred from submitting bids or being awarded any public-work contracts with the state of New York or any municipality or public body within the state for five years.

Attorney General James' investigation began after a whistleblower filed a *qui tam* complaint under the New York False Claims Act, the Federal False Claims Act, and similar statutes in Massachusetts and New Jersey. The New York False Claims Act allows private persons to file civil actions on behalf of the government and to share in any recovery. The recovery announced today is part of a multistate agreement between VJA and New York, Massachusetts, and New Jersey.

New Yorkers can learn more about [filing a New York False Claims Act on the Office of the Attorney General's \(OAG\) website](#).

The OAG wishes to thank the whistleblower — without whose information the misconduct might not have been discovered — and also the whistleblower's attorneys. The OAG also wishes to thank the Office of the Inspector General of the Metropolitan Transit Authority, the Office of the Inspector General of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the New York City Law Department, and the Offices of the Attorneys General of Massachusetts and New Jersey for their extensive cooperation and support with the investigation of VJA. The OAG extends particular thanks to Assistant Deputy Inspector General Monica Hickey-Martin in the Legal and Investigations Department at the Metropolitan Transit Authority; Investigator Mia Chang of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey; Senior Counsel Anjan Mishra of the New York City Law Department; Assistant Attorney General Erin Staab of Massachusetts; and Deputy Attorney General Eric Boden of New Jersey. Finally, the OAG wishes to thank the Office of the U.S. Attorney for the District of Massachusetts for its work in this matter.

New York's investigation of VJA was led by Assistant Attorney General Laura Jereski, with assistance by Legal Support Analyst Iuliia Belyshkina of the Taxpayer Protection Bureau. The Taxpayer Protection Bureau is led by Bureau Chief Thomas Teige Carroll and Deputy Bureau Chief Scott J. Spiegelman, and is a part of the Division for Economic Justice, which is led by Chief Deputy Attorney General Chris D'Angelo and First Deputy Attorney General Jennifer Levy.

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