



ALVIN L. BRAGG JR.,
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 1, 2025

D.A. Bragg Secures Return Of \$170k To Workers In Wage Theft Prosecution

D.A.'s Office Uses Novel "Stolen Wage Fund" to Supplement

GEORGE COLE's \$90,000 Restitution

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin L. Bragg Jr. today announced the sentencing of GEORGE COLE, 65, and his company COLE NYC LLC, to six months in jail, five years of probation, 100 hours of court supervised community service and the restitution of \$90,000 in wages. The Department of Investigation and the Department of Buildings will pursue revocation of the defendant's Master Rigger license. COLE stole approximately \$169,500 of wages from his workers between February 2022 and April 2023. The D.A.'s Office is using its Stolen Wage Fund to cover the remaining amount and make the workers whole.

On May 13, 2025, COLE pleaded guilty in New York State Supreme Court to two counts of Forgery in the Second Degree, one count of Scheme to Defraud in the First Degree, two counts of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, and one count of Effect of Failure to Secure Compensation.

"George Cole stole hard-earned wages from workers who put hours of dedicated labor into construction projects, using the stolen money to purchase lavish personal items. Now, this defendant will return wages to the very workers he stole from," said **District Attorney Bragg**. "Every worker in Manhattan deserves to receive each dollar they make, and my office will continue to create accountability for those who jeopardize that. We were also proud to use our Stolen Wage Fund to make these workers whole. To report wage theft, please call or message our Worker Protection Unit at (646) 712-0298."

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said, "This defendant prioritized profit over fair pay and worker safety, depriving workers of their earned wages and failing to maintain legally required insurance to protect them in the dangerous job of repairing and maintaining the City's skyscrapers. Today, with a sentence of six months' incarceration and a requirement to repay his workers, he is held accountable for these serious offenses. In addition, DOI and the Department of Buildings will pursue revocation of the defendant's Master Rigger license. I thank the DOB for their assistance in this investigation and the Manhattan District Attorney's Office for their commitment to protecting worker's safety and fair pay in New York City."

"An important component of the Department of Buildings' public safety mission is holding bad actors in the construction industry accountable," said **Department of Buildings Commissioner Jimmy Oddo**. "We thank the Manhattan's District Attorney's office for their successful prosecution of George Cole for filing fraudulent documents and other illegal actions, and DOB plans to pursue a case to revoke Mr. Cole's Master Rigger license due to his flagrant abuse of his professional

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responsibilities. Collaboration between DOB and our partners in law enforcement helps us ensure that New York City's construction industry is held to the highest standards."

"This individual put workers in harm's way, stole their wages, and forged official documents to cover up their wrongdoing and keep the fraud going," said **Port Authority Inspector General John Gay**. "These reckless actions are intolerable, jeopardizing the safety of both workers and the public at some of our busiest facilities that are used by millions of commuters and visitors. We're grateful to our local, state and federal partners who helped deliver justice in this case."

New York State Insurance Fund Executive Director & CEO Gaurav Vasisht said, "This conviction underscores our unwavering commitment to holding bad actors accountable. When individuals cheat the system, they endanger workers and drive up costs for honest businesses. We're grateful to DA Bragg and the Construction Fraud Task Force for their continued partnership in safeguarding the system for everyone it's meant to protect."

New York State Department of Labor Commissioner Roberta Reardon said, "Every cent stolen through wages adversely impacts the lives of workers and their families. I thank the Manhattan District Attorney's Office for continuing to be a strong partner in our fight against wage theft. Governor Hochul's recently enacted 2026 budget enhances our ability to pursue these bad actors and put money back into the pockets of hard-working New Yorkers. Our message is clear: If you steal wages from workers in New York State, you will face serious consequences."

According to court documents and statements made on the record, and as admitted in the defendant's guilty plea, in November 2021, COLE failed to maintain his NYSIF policy while continuing to take on rigging jobs throughout the City. On July 1, 2022, COLE submitted a forged Certificate of Insurance to the New York City Department of Buildings, with inaccurate dates and a QR code linking to a website that stated his insurance coverage ended on November 28, 2021. He also submitted a similarly forged certificate to the Port Authority on August 2, 2022, pertaining to work being done at the Oculus in Lower Manhattan.

Between February 2022 and April 2023, COLE also engaged in a wage theft scheme through which he stole at least \$169,500 in wages owed to seven different employees. One employee is owed at least \$48,000 for 20 weeks of work. COLE gave his employees partial payments, made excuses for the missing wages, and insulted them when they asked for full payment.

During this time period, COLE spent hundreds of thousands on his girlfriends, concert tickets, floral arrangements, a Mercedes Benz, and other luxury purchases. COLE also cashed more than \$2 million at Pay-O-Matic during this time, including on days where he refused to pay his workers their wages.

Assistant D.A.s Rachana Pathak (Chief of the Worker Protection Unit) and James Clarke (Worker Protection Unit) handled the prosecution of this case under the supervision of Assistant D.A.s Christopher Beard (Deputy Chief of the Rackets Bureau), Christopher Conroy (Chief of the Rackets Bureau), Judy Salwen (Deputy Chief of the Investigation Division) and Executive Assistant D.A. Jodie Kane (Chief of the Investigation Division). Assistant D.A. Lynn Goodman, Former Worker Protection Unit Coordinator Danielle Corbett, Paralegals Lilah Hixson and Ava Thomas, and Financial Investigator Jessica Abanilla provided valuable assistance with the case.

For the Department of Investigation, the case was investigated by Former Special Investigator Edward Vallejo, in DOI's Office of the Inspector General for DOB and supervised by First Deputy Inspector General Kim Ryan-Flores, Deputy Commissioner of Strategic Initiatives Christopher Ryan and Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella.

D.A. Bragg thanked the New York City Department of Investigation, the New York State Insurance Fund, the New York State Department of Labor, the Department of Buildings, the Inspector General's Office of the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey, and the New York State Workers' Compensation Board for their assistance.

Defendant Information:

GEORGE COLE

New York, NY

Convicted:

- Forgery in the Second Degree, a class D felony, two counts
- Scheme to Defraud in the First Degree, a class E felony, one count
- Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, a class E felony, two counts
- Effect of Failure to Secure Compensation, one count

Sentenced:

- 6 Months of Jail
- 5 Years of Probation
- 100 Hours of Community Service
- \$90,000 Restitution

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