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D.A. BROWN: QUEENS CONTRACTOR CHARGED
WITH CHEATING WORKERS BY FAILING TO PAY THEM WAGES
Defendant Is Alleged To Owe More Than \$33,000 To Nine Day Laborers

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown today announced that an Astoria contractor has been charged with violating the state's labor law by failing to pay nine workers more than \$33,000 in wages for work they performed for him between 2003-2005 at various construction sites throughout Queens.

District Attorney Brown said, "The defendant, a general contractor, is accused of cheating nine day laborers by failing to pay them for work that they had performed for him. The victims who are undocumented residents, were trying to earn an honest living and send money back to their families in their native countries. The defendant assumed, incorrectly, that his alleged greed would go undetected because the victims would be fearful of possible deportation and not complain to authorities. My office is committed to protecting the rights of all individuals regardless of their immigration status and preventing their exploitation by unscrupulous employers."

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Roberto Perez, 66, of 15 Chestnut Lane in Woodbury, New York. The defendant is the owner and president of Park Construction (also known as Quality Group), which does general construction jobs and is located at 18-49 Steinway Street in Astoria. The defendant is charged with violating Section 191 (a) (i) of the New York State Labor Law for failing to pay wages to his employees. If convicted, the defendant, faces up to one year in jail and/or a \$1,000 fine.

District Attorney Brown said that, according to the criminal charges, Perez, as the owner of Park Construction, employed the nine workers as manual laborers at various times between January 1, 2003 and June 30, 2005, and not only failed to pay each worker their wages within the time required by law but not at all. It is alleged that the workers are owed a total of \$33,150 in unpaid wages.

District Attorney Brown's Economic Crimes Bureau initiated an investigation in April when an attorney representing the nine workers reported that the defendant had ignored their requests for payment. The defendant was arrested earlier today at his Astoria office and is being held pending arraignment later today in Queens Criminal Court in Kew Gardens.

The investigation was conducted by Detectives Richard Lewis and Jerry Pugh, with the assistance of Detectives Evelyn Alegre and Ketty Larco, of the District Attorney's Detective Squad under the supervision of Lieutenant Robert Burke and Sergeant John Kenna and the overall supervision of Chief Lawrence J. Festa and Deputy Chief Al D. Velardi.

Assistant District Attorney Rosemarie Bucheri of the District Attorney's Economic Crimes Bureau is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Gregory C. Pavlides, Bureau Chief, and Christina Hanophy, Deputy Bureau Chief, and the overall supervision of Executive District Attorney for Investigations Peter A. Crusco and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Linda M. Cantoni.

It should be noted that criminal charges are merely an accusation and that defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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