



**NEWS FROM:  
THE JOINT COMMISSION ON PUBLIC ETHICS**

**DANIEL J. HORWITZ  
CHAIR**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT 518.408.3976**

**JCOPE CHARGES STATE EMPLOYEE WITH GIFT VIOLATION**

**Department of Veterans Affairs counselor allegedly received more than \$500,000 in gifts**

ALBANY – (February 25, 2016) – The New York State Joint Commission on Public Ethics (“Commission”) today announced that it has issued a report finding a substantial basis to conclude that an employee with the state Department of Veterans Affairs (“DVA”) violated multiple sections of the Public Officers Law by receiving more than \$500,000 worth of gifts from a World War II veteran whom she served in her official role at DVA.

Tracy Kinn is a counselor in the DVA’s Buffalo regional office, assisting veterans in filing claims for federal, state, local, and private veterans’ benefits. She began assisting veteran Charles Matie with his benefits beginning in 2002.

Over time, Matie gave Kinn a variety of gifts, including a BMW car and an antique German Luger pistol. Matie also funded a joint checking account for himself and Kinn, from which Kinn used more than \$10,000 to pay for her personal expenses. Matie also named Kinn as the beneficiary to a \$175,000 annuity and changed his will to leave her his entire estate. Within days of Matie’s passing, Kinn claimed the annuity; she later liquidated the checking account and sold Matie’s home and belongings.

“When a state employee acts in their own self-interest, it violates their official and legal obligations,” but when it happens at DVA, it also destroys the moral compact we have with our veterans,” said Commission spokesperson Walter McClure.

This matter was referred to the Commission by the Office of the New York State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott. The Commission’s report found a substantial basis to indicate that Kinn violated multiple provisions of the Public Officers Law, including a prohibition on accepting gifts that are intended to influence her, or that could be reasonably expected to influence her, or that are intended as a reward for an official action on her part.

The matter will now go before an independent hearing officer who will issue a report and recommendations to the Commission, including whether a civil penalty should be assessed.

To read the report, click [here](#).

