



Department of Justice

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Southern District of Georgia

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AUGUSTA MAN INDICTED FOR STEALING FEDERAL FUNDS INTENDED TO PAY FOR MEALS FOR LOW-INCOME CHILDREN

SAVANNAH, GA: BERNARD WALKER, 44, of Augusta, Georgia was indicted yesterday by a federal grand jury for fraudulently obtaining checks worth tens of thousands of dollars from a federally-funded, not-for-profit organization located in Augusta, Georgia and then laundering that money through businesses located in Waynesboro, Georgia. The indictment alleges that WALKER committed these crimes over a span of two and a half years while he was a nutrition specialist for the Central Savannah River Area Economic Opportunity Authority and was responsible for providing meals for the low-income children who were enrolled in Head Start programs in approximately eleven counties in the Augusta, Georgia area.

United States Attorney Edward J. Tarver said, "Each year the federal government provides millions of dollars to Head Start programs in the Augusta, Georgia area. Taxpayers have a right to expect that this money will be used for its intended purpose; in this case, providing meals to disadvantaged children. The indictment alleges that this defendant abused his position to steal federal funds and used them for his own benefit to purchase, among other things, automobiles and furniture. This indictment demonstrates that the U.S. Attorney's Office will use every available resource to put those who engage in fraudulent behavior in Time-Out."

Special Agent in Charge Karen Citizen-Wilcox of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Inspector General, Atlanta Region, stated that her office "stands firmly committed to diligently pursuing the prosecution of individuals who defraud the Department out of funds intended to provide nutritious meals for eligible low-income children. This indictment sends a strong message that fraud for greed, personal gain and profit will not be tolerated at the expense of taxpayers."

The indictment charges WALKER with seven counts of theft from a program receiving federal funding, each carrying a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000, as well as seven counts of money laundering, each of which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000. The indictment also seeks the forfeiture of the proceeds of WALKER's crimes.

Tarver emphasized that an indictment is only an accusation and is not evidence of guilt. The defendant is entitled to a fair trial, during which it will be the Government's burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The indictment of WALKER arises out of an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Inspector General. Assistant United States Attorney David M. Stewart is prosecuting the case.