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**DEFENDANTS ARRAIGNED IN FEDERAL COURT ON
FOOD STAMP FRAUD CHARGES**

\$2.7 million dollars in fraud

Lake Charles, La.: A federal grand jury returned a 26-count indictment in a multi-million dollar Food Stamp Fraud case and the two primary defendants were arraigned today, United States Attorney Stephanie Finley announced. The United States Food Stamp Program, officially titled the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), administers federal benefits to low income participants who need assistance buying food for themselves and their families. Both Craig Michael Nash and Hillary Nash III, represented by counsel, entered pleas of "not guilty." Rosalyn Mary Hilliard has previously been arraigned and also entered a "not guilty."

The indictment in this case alleges that the Nash brothers owned two stores in Lake Charles, Goodfellas and Goodfellas II, and allowed SNAP benefit recipients to exchange their food stamps for cash, alcohol and tobacco. Federal law prohibits the food stamp debit cards to be used to obtain alcohol, tobacco or cash, and any store owner participating in the SNAP program agrees to these terms prior to being authorized to redeem food stamp debit cards containing the benefits. The indictment also alleges that Goodfellas profited by charging a fee of approximately half of the food stamp benefits from the debit card before providing a reduced amount of cash to the card holder. The Goodfellas stores redeemed over **\$2.7 million dollars** from the federal government through the SNAP program, and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) investigators estimate a large portion of that amount was obtained fraudulently.

Craig Michael Nash, Hillary Nash III and another defendant, Rosalyn Mary Hilliard, face up to twenty years in prison. Trial will be set at the end of June.

This is the second case in five months related to Food Stamp Fraud. United States v. Vincent Edward DaPrince, which is being prosecuted by AUSA Daniel J. McCoy and is being investigated by the United States Secret Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture-OIG, and La. Department of Children and Family Services, involves 30 counts of Food Stamp Fraud resulting in approximately \$1 million dollars of fraudulent transactions.

An indictment is merely an accusation and all defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

This case is being investigated by the U. S. Department of Agriculture- OIG, New Orleans Field Office, Louisiana Office of Alcohol & Tobacco Control, and Louisiana Attorney General's Office. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Myers P. Namie.

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