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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
THURSDAY, MARCH 10, 2011
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FORMER U.S. PROBATION OFFICE EMPLOYEE CHARGED IN FRAUD

CHICAGO A former procurement administrator of the United States Probation Office, Northern District of Illinois, responsible for overseeing the Probation Office's purchase of goods and services, was charged by information today with one count of mail fraud for allegedly engaging in a fraud scheme in her official capacity. The defendant, **Colleen DeSimone**, 42, of Oak Lawn, Illinois, will be arraigned by U.S. District Judge Suzanne B. Conlon at a later date. The charged fraud was first uncovered by the Probation Office during an internal audit and referred to law enforcement.

The information alleges that beginning in about December 2006, and continuing through at least March 2009, DeSimone purchased items for personal use using U.S. Probation-issued credit cards which were to be used only for incidental expenses incurred during official government travel or for the purchase of goods and services for the use of U.S. Probation employees in carrying out the work of the Probation Office. DeSimone instead used the cards for personal purchases from Wal-Mart, J.C.Penney, American Airlines, United Airlines, Southwest Airlines, Amazon.com, Target, Apple, Dick's Sporting Goods, Dell and TigerDirect.com, and also obtained cash advances for

personal use, well knowing that use of the cards was restricted to official government business. DeSimone is alleged to have made unauthorized purchases for such personal items as a gazebo, iPod devices, cameras, DVD players, a Nintendo Wii and numerous Wii games and accessories. DeSimone allegedly caused the Probation Office to pay for these personal expenses by creating and submitting fraudulent purchase orders, payment vouchers and travel vouchers, well knowing that these expenses were not for official government use.

If convicted of mail fraud, the maximum penalty is 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine, as well as restitution. The Court, however, would determine the appropriate sentence to be imposed under the advisory United States Sentencing Guidelines. An information contains only charges and is not evidence of guilt. The defendant is presumed innocent and is entitled to a fair trial at which the government has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Greg Deis.

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