



**United States Department of Justice  
United States Attorney's Office  
District of Minnesota**

## **News Release**

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### **Inver Grove Heights man indicted for armed robbery of White Bear Lake and Maplewood convenience stores**

MINNEAPOLIS—Earlier today in federal court, a 21-year-old Inver Grove Heights man was indicted in connection with the June 14, 2011, armed robberies of SuperAmerica stores in Maplewood and White Bear Lake. Joseph Laurence Forliti was charged with two counts of possession of a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence, which, in this case, carries a potential maximum penalty of life in prison. Forliti also was charged with two counts of interference with commerce by robbery, pursuant to the Hobbs Act. The indictment alleges that on June 14, 2011, Forliti took money from the stores by threatening the store clerks with a firearm.

According to a law enforcement affidavit filed in the case, two masked men robbed a SuperAmerica store in Maplewood at approximately midnight on June 14, 2011. Allegedly, one of the robbers, later identified as Forliti, ran behind the checkout counter, pointed a gun at the clerk, and yelled at her to open the cash register. Next, while Forliti reportedly took money from the register, his accomplice held onto a customer who happened to be in the store at the time. Both men then allegedly ran from the store with a total of \$200.

At 4:28 a.m. on that same day, police responded to a robbery alarm at a White Bear Lake SuperAmerica, where they were told by witnesses that the store had just been robbed. Reportedly, the two robbers, dressed in black, rushed into the store and up to the checkout counter. One of the men, later identified as Forliti, was allegedly armed with a handgun. He

reportedly jumped onto the checkout counter and ordered the clerk to open the cash register. According to police records, he then grabbed cash from the drawer and fled from the store with his partner.

At 5:15 a.m., a Washington County Sheriff's deputy observed two men near a wooded area close to the White Bear Lake store. The men matched the descriptions of the robbers. The deputy apprehended the men and recovered \$181 in cash from Forliti's pockets. Forliti is being held in federal custody on these charges. His alleged accomplice is being charged in Ramsey County in connection with the White Bear Lake robbery.

If convicted, Forliti faces a potential maximum penalty of life in prison on each count of possession of a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence. He faces up to 20 years on each count of interference with commerce by robbery, pursuant to the Hobbs Act. All sentences will be determined by a federal district court judge.

The Hobbs Act, passed by Congress in 1946, allows federal prosecutors to prosecute violent, habitual criminals who commit armed robbery in places of business involved in interstate commerce. Federal prosecution of these cases is sometimes beneficial since the penalties are often tougher than under state law. Furthermore, because the federal system has no parole, those who receive federal sentences serve virtually the entire time imposed.

This case is the result of an investigation by the United States Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the sheriff offices of Ramsey and Washington counties, and the police departments of Maplewood and White Bear Lake. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Julie E. Allyn.

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*An indictment is a determination by a grand jury that there is probable cause to believe that offenses have been committed by a defendant. A defendant, of course, is presumed innocent until he or she pleads guilty or is proven guilty at trial.*