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*Office of the United States Attorney, Ann Birmingham Scheel
District of Arizona*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**FORMER FIESTA BOWL CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER INDICTED
FOR FILING FALSE NON-PROFIT TAX RETURNS AND FOR
MAKING CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS IN THE NAMES OF OTHERS**

PHOENIX – A federal grand jury in Phoenix returned a nine-count indictment yesterday against Natalie Wisneski, 47, of Tempe, Arizona, for Making Campaign Contributions in the Name of Another, Causing False Statements to Be Made to the Federal Election Commission, and Filing False Tax Returns, and for Conspiring to commit the above offenses.

The indictment alleges that Wisneski, as an officer and high-paid employee of the Fiesta Bowl, solicited campaign contributions from Fiesta Bowl employees for federal, state and local candidates for elective office, and arranged to reimburse the employees for their contributions with Fiesta Bowl money.

Reimbursement for federal campaign contributions is prohibited under the Federal Election Campaign Act, and it also causes the political campaigns to file false information with the Federal Election Commission as to the identity of the true donor. (The federal campaigns identified in the indictment have cooperated in the investigation, and no evidence suggests that the campaigns knew that the Fiesta Bowl reimbursed its employees.)

The indictment also alleges that Wisneski filed false tax returns on behalf of the Fiesta Bowl when she denied in the tax returns that the Fiesta Bowl had any lobbying expenses or political expenditures. Wisneski will be summonsed to appear for her arraignment on Nov. 30 at 10:30 a.m. The overall investigation continues, and the Fiesta Bowl organization continues to cooperate with the investigation.

A conviction for Conspiracy carries a maximum penalty of five years, a \$250,000 fine or both. A conviction for Making Campaign Contributions in the Names of Others is an amount greater than \$10,000 in a single calendar year is punishable as a felony, and carries a maximum penalty of two years, a \$250,000 fine or both, and in an amount between \$2,000 and \$10,000 in a single calendar year is punishable as a misdemeanor, and carries a maximum penalty of one year, a \$100,000 fine or both.

A conviction for False Statements carries a maximum penalty of five years, a \$250,000 fine or both, and a conviction for Filing False Tax Returns carries a maximum penalty of three years, a \$250,000 fine or both. In determining an actual sentence, Judge James A. Teilborg will consult the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

An indictment is simply a method by which a person is charged with criminal activity and raises no inference of guilt. An individual is presumed innocent until competent evidence is presented to a jury that establishes guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The investigation has been conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigations. Federal prosecutors and agents have also worked with State of Arizona prosecutors and agents who are participating in the continuing investigation conducted by the Arizona Attorney General's Office.

The federal prosecution is being handled by Frank T. Galati and Gary M. Restaino, Assistant U.S. Attorneys, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

CASE NUMBER: CR-11-2216-PHX-JAT
RELEASE NUMBER: 2011-256()

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