

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA : Hon.
 :
 v. : Crim. No. 18-
 :
 MARIA TERESA VENEGAS : 18 U.S.C. §§ 641 and 2
 a/k/a “Maria Teresa Vanegas,” :
 a/k/a “Teresa Vanegas,” :
 a/k/a “Maria Vanegas Lazo” :
 a/k/a “Maria Vaneges” :

INFORMATION

The defendant having waived in open court prosecution by Indictment, the United States Attorney for the District of New Jersey charges:

1. At various times relevant to this Information:
 - a. Jenny’s Deli LLC (“Jenny’s Deli”) was a convenience store located in Newark, New Jersey;
 - b. Defendant Maria Teresa Venegas was the listed owner of Jenny’s Deli;
 - c. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (“SNAP”) was a program funded by the United States government, which provided nutrition assistance to eligible, low-income individuals and families. SNAP was funded by the United States Department of Agriculture.
 - d. Pursuant to the Food Stamp Act of 1977, as amended, 7 U.S.C. §§ 2011-32, and its accompanying regulations, 7 C.F.R. §§ 271-85, eligible low income persons (“SNAP Recipients”) could obtain SNAP benefits loaded onto Electronic Benefits Transfer (“EBT”) cards. SNAP benefits could

only lawfully be used to purchase specific food items, and not to purchase prepared foods, alcoholic beverages, pet food, or other non-food items. SNAP benefits could not lawfully be exchanged for cash.

e. Food retailers, such as Jenny's Deli, applied for authorization to participate in the SNAP. Once a retailer had been authorized to enroll in the SNAP, it became an "Authorized Retailer" and could redeem purchases of eligible food products by SNAP Recipients.

f. SNAP Recipients completed purchases by swiping an EBT card at an Authorized Retailer's point of sale terminal and entering a PIN. Payments were then transferred from the United States government into a bank account designated by the Authorized Retailer.

2. Since in or around October 2011, Jenny's Deli was authorized to accept SNAP benefits.

3. Beginning at least as early as November 2011 and continuing through in or around February 2018, Maria Teresa Venegas unlawfully redeemed SNAP benefits in exchange for cash.

4. Specifically, Maria Venegas entered fictitious dollar amounts for allegedly eligible SNAP EBT transactions, provided SNAP Recipients a percentage of the transaction's value in cash, and kept the remainder. For example, a SNAP Recipient might have purchased eligible food items worth approximately \$5.00, but Maria Teresa Venegas debited, for example, approximately \$75.00 from the SNAP Recipient's EBT account, which was then credited to Jenny's Deli's bank account. Maria Teresa Venegas then gave the

SNAP Recipient a portion of the overage in cash and kept a portion of the proceeds (not including the cost of store items that were purchased).

5. From in or around November 2011 through in or around March 2018, in Essex County, in the District of New Jersey, and elsewhere, the defendant,

MARIA TERESA VENEGAS,

did, knowingly and intentionally, embezzle, steal, purloin, and convert to her own use, money and things of value of the United States, namely, approximately \$888,486.89 in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits funded by the United States Department of Agriculture.

In violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 641 and 2.

FORFEITURE ALLEGATION

1. As the result of committing the offense in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 641 alleged in this Information, which is an offense constituting specified unlawful activity as defined in 18 U.S.C. § 1956(c)(7), defendant Maria Teresa Venegas shall forfeit to the United States, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 981(a)(1)(C) and 28 U.S.C. § 2461(c), all property, real and personal, that constitutes or is derived from proceeds traceable to the commission of such offense, and all property traceable thereto, including, but not limited to, a sum of money representing the proceeds of such offense.

2. If any of the property described above, as a result of any act or omission of the defendant:

- (a) cannot be located upon the exercise of due diligence;
- (b) has been transferred or sold to, or deposited with, a third party;
- (c) has been placed beyond the jurisdiction of the court;
- (d) has been substantially diminished in value; or
- (e) has been commingled with other property which cannot be divided without difficulty,

the United States shall be entitled, pursuant to 21 U.S.C. § 853(p), as incorporated by 28 U.S.C. § 2461(c), to forfeiture of any other property of the defendant, Maria Teresa Venegas, up to the value of the forfeitable property.


CRAIG CARPENITO
United States Attorney

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**MARIA TERESA VENEGAS
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INFORMATION FOR

18 U.S.C. §§ 641 and 2

CRAIG CARPENITO

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