

Timothy Jeffries, Director

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## **Multi-Agency Investigation Leads to Indictments for Food Stamp Fraud in Colorado City, Arizona**

**PHOENIX** – After a lengthy investigation, the Department of Economic Security (DES), Office of Inspector General (OIG) successfully partnered with the US Attorney’s Office, FBI, IRS Criminal Investigation, Washington County, Utah Sheriff’s Office, Washington County, Utah Attorney’s Office and the Mohave County, Arizona Sheriff’s Office to serve search warrants on leaders and members of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (FLDS) on charges of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) fraud, and conspiracy to commit money laundering.

The indictments provide that church leaders took SNAP benefits from eligible recipients and utilized them for unapproved purposes. Two warrants were faithfully and successfully served in Colorado City, Arizona, while two others were executed in Hildale, Utah. A final arrest warrant was executed in Custer County, South Dakota.

Timothy Jeffries, Director of the Arizona Department of Economic Security, has persistently fought to protect innocent victims from food stamp fraud. “This is a great day and a huge win for all victims of food stamp fraud, especially for those who reside in Arizona. I am committed to fighting for the rights of individuals who are truly in need of these benefits, which helps to put food on their table. Stealing from the poor in any manner is wrong. Those who commit these heinous crimes should and will be punished.”

Department of Economic Security Inspector General Juan J. Arcellana, echoed Director Jeffries’ comments, expressing his gratitude that another positive step has been taken in the never ending fight against food stamp fraud. “The indictments in this case will put an end to a sophisticated, organized, and illegal operation. We will vigorously continue to combat food stamp fraud at any level. Protecting the integrity of the SNAP program is critical to all Arizonans.”

Department of Economic Security records indicate that there are approximately 3,900 individuals in 500 households currently receiving SNAP benefits in Colorado City.

Lyle Jeffs, currently running the polygamous Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints for his imprisoned brother, Warren Jeffs, was amongst those indicted. The number of agencies who participated in this effort is an indication of the complexity of the operation. Representatives from all of these agencies expressed gratitude that the raids were accomplished without incident.

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