



PRESS RELEASE

CONTACT: Elizabeth M. Martinez
Executive Assistant U.S. Attorney
Public Affairs Officer
elizabeth.martinez@usdoj.gov
505.224.1469

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FORMER EMPLOYEE OF NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
ARRAIGNED ON FEDERAL BANK FRAUD CHARGES

ALBUQUERQUE – This morning in federal court, Bernadette Casias, 49, a resident but not a member of San Juan Pueblo, N.M., was arraigned on an indictment charging her with 24 counts of bank fraud. If convicted, Casias faces a maximum penalty of 30 years of imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine on each of the 24 charges. Casias entered a not-guilty plea to the indictment during this morning’s hearing, and was released pending trial on conditions and pretrial supervision.

U.S. Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales said that Casias is charged with defrauding her former employer of more than \$56,000 by stealing checks from the mail that were intended for her employer and converting the money to her own use. At the time of the offenses charged in the indictment Casias was employed by Interfaith-LEAP (Leadership for Empowerment of All People), Inc., a charitable organization that provides resources for Northern New Mexico families challenged by the effects of alcohol, drugs, hunger and limited health care.

According to the indictment, between April 2007 and April 2009, Casias allegedly devised a scheme to fraudulently obtain money by false pretenses. Pursuant to the scheme, Casias allegedly would pick up incoming mail for Interfaith-LEAP at the post office, extract checks from the mail that were meant for her employer, and either cash the checks or endorse the checks to other payees for her own benefit.

As part of the scheme, Casias allegedly opened an account at a federally insured credit union in Los Alamos County, N.M., by representing herself as Program Owner of “Inter-Faith” and using an altered New Mexico Taxation and Revenue Department documentation that purported to provide a CRS number for “Inter-Faith.” The indictment alleges that, between Dec. 2007 and April 2009, Casias cashed and deposited 24 checks that were made payable to Interfaith-LEAP and had an aggregate value of \$56,220.24 into the aforementioned bank account or other accounts she controlled.

The indictment seeks forfeiture of property constituting, or derived from proceeds obtained directly, or indirectly, from Casias’ alleged illegal conduct, and a money judgment of at

least \$56,220.24, the amount of money allegedly derived from the proceeds of the offenses charged in the indictment.

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Cynthia L. Weisman.

An indictment is only an accusation. All criminal defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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