

## Federal agents arrest ten business owners during two-week federal search and arrest warrant operation

27. September 2011 By Madelaine Lane

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Last week, the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Michigan announced the end of a two-week long operation targeting businesses in Southeast Michigan engaging in food stamp fraud. The United States Attorney's Office worked with the Office of the Inspector General, the Department of Agriculture, the Internal Revenue Service, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Michigan State Police to locate businesses redeeming food stamps for cash and/or allowing beneficiaries to trade food stamps for tobacco, liquor, or other items not permitted under federal regulations. In most cases, the businesses are alleged to have resold the food stamps to customers after a mark-up. During the operation, eight businesses were raided and ten business owners were arrested for defrauding the food assistance program.

These businesses and individuals are just the latest defendants caught by the federal government's Bridge Card Enforcement Team (BCET). Since its inception in 2007, BCET has effectuated 125 arrests and executed 169 search warrants. The team's efforts have resulted in 98 guilty pleas, \$21.1 million in fines and restitution, and an additional \$3.2 in forfeited funds. The United States Attorneys Offices in both the Eastern and Western Districts of Michigan have aggressively prosecuted these fraud cases.