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NEWS RELEASE

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Pair That Trafficked Nutritional Assistance Benefits Jailed

VENTURA, California - District Attorney Gregory D. Totten announced today that on March 5, 2018, Gerardo Vaca Navarro (DOB 06/07/56) and Martha Leticia Navarro (DOB 07/16/55) of Oxnard were sentenced to serve 14 months in the Ventura County jail for trafficking in food assistance benefits. In June 2016, the Navarros pled guilty to two counts of fraudulently transferring electronic Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Cal Fresh benefits, and one count of grand theft. They also admitted that they trafficked more than \$50,000 of these benefits. This case was the result of a joint investigation by the District Attorney's Bureau of Investigation and the United States Department of Agriculture's Office of the Inspector General.

CalFresh and SNAP provide food assistance benefits to eligible, low-income individuals and families. It is illegal for a store owner to redeem these food assistance benefits for cash, cigarettes, or alcohol. The Navarros were arrested in an interagency crackdown on store owners who pay cash to recipients of government food assistance benefits and persons who fraudulently sell their Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) benefits for cash. Between January 2012 and October 2014, the Navarros illegally received \$93,868 in EBT benefits at Chivas Market in Oxnard.

Prior to sentencing the defendants paid \$31,200 in restitution. In addition, they were ordered to serve 34 months on mandatory supervision and pay an additional \$75,977 in restitution.

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The Ventura County District Attorney's Office is the public prosecutor for the county's 850,000 residents. The office employs approximately 280 employees including attorneys, investigators, victim advocates, and other professional support staff who strive to seek justice, ensure public safety, and protect the rights of crime victims.

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