

66-year old Massachusetts woman charged with committing fraud to receive SNAP and Social Security benefits

A Cambridge woman was arrested today and charged with stealing Social Security benefits and committing wire fraud to receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program ("SNAP") benefits, formerly known as Food Stamps.

Shirley Buchanan, 66, was indicted on one count of theft of public funds and three counts of wire fraud. She is scheduled to make an initial appearance today before U.S. District Court Magistrate Judge Jennifer Boal this afternoon.

According to the indictment, Buchanan maintained and used two Social Security numbers under two different names, both of which she applied for and received Social Security benefits under. Buchanan also allegedly applied for and received SNAP benefits she was not entitled to using the two names and numbers. As a result, Buchanan stole approximately \$184,410 in Social Security benefits from March 1993 through November 2018, as well as approximately \$12,916.89 in SNAP benefits from February 2012 through April 2020.

The charge of theft of public funds provides for a sentence of up to 10 years in prison, three years of supervised release and a fine of \$250,000 or twice the gross gain or loss, whichever is greater. The charge of wire fraud provides for a sentence of up to 20 years in prison, three years of supervised release and a fine of \$250,000 or twice the gross gain or loss, whichever is greater. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Acting United States Attorney Nathaniel R. Mendell; Tonya Perkins, Special Agent in Charge of the Social Security Administration, Office of Inspector General, Office of Investigations, Boston Field Division; and Suzanne M. Bump, State Auditor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts made the announcement today. Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Karen Burzycki of Mendell's Major Crimes Unit is prosecuting the case.