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January 5, 2012

MADIGAN: ROCKFORD WOMAN STOLE \$1 MILLION FROM WIRTZ BEVERAGE

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced charges against a Rockford area woman for stealing more than \$1 million from Schaumburg-based Wirtz Beverage.

Defendant Linda Bessert, 48, of Winnebago, was formally indicted and arrested this week on charges of one count of theft over \$1 million, a Class X felony punishable by six to 30 years in the Illinois Department of Corrections, and one count of theft over \$500,000, a Class 1 felony punishable by four to 15 years in IDOC. Bessert is being held on \$500,000 bond.

While employed by Wirtz as an office manager in the company's Rockford location, Bessert processed customer payments and was responsible for sending those deposits to the bank by armored car. Madigan alleged Bessert stole cash from deposits totaling \$1,058,293 over a six-year period, from July 2004 to October 2010.

"These allegations show that the defendant devised and executed a scheme to deceive her employer and steal over \$1 million," Madigan said. "This prosecution will ensure she will be held accountable for these illegal acts."

Madigan brought the case based on an investigation and referral from the Federal Bureau of Investigations.

Assistant Attorney General Anshuman Vaidya is handling the case for Madigan's Financial Crimes Bureau.

The public is reminded that the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

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