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### News Releases

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## Illegal alien arrested, charged with voter fraud

LAKE COUNTY, Ill. - An illegal alien from the Philippines was arrested Thursday morning on a felony complaint charging her with 17 counts related to voter fraud in Lake County. The state charges resulted from a joint investigation conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and the Lake County State's Attorneys Office. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) also provided assistance.

Maria Azada, 53, of Grayslake, Ill., was arrested March 17 by ICE HSI agents and a Lake County State's Attorneys special investigator. Azada faces 17 felony counts in Lake County Circuit Court of perjury, mutilation of election materials, and tampering with voting machines in connection with illegal voting by a non-U.S. citizen.

The investigation began in February 2009 when Azada admitted to a USCIS officer during an interview for an immigration benefit that she had voted in an election. It is illegal for foreign nationals to vote in national or state elections in the United States.

A subsequent investigation revealed that Azada allegedly voted nine times in primary, general and consolidated elections between 2003 and 2009. According to the arrest warrant, Azada allegedly falsely claimed to be a U.S. citizen on two Illinois Voter Registration applications.

"Our nation's founders reserved the right to vote in this country for U.S. citizens," said Gary Hartwig, special agent in charge of ICE HSI in Chicago. "ICE HSI will work aggressively to investigate and bring to justice anyone who falsely claims to be a U.S. citizen so they can illegally vote in an election."

If convicted, Azada faces up to five years in state prison on each of the two perjury counts. She also faces up to three years on each of the six counts of tampering with voting machines, and each of the nine counts of mutilation of election materials.

The public is reminded that an indictment contains only charges and is not evidence of guilt. The defendant is presumed innocent and is entitled to a fair trial at which the government has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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Last Reviewed/Updated: 04/10/2015