



LANSING CHAPTER OF THE ASSOCIATION OF CERTIFIED FRAUD EXAMINERS

Announcements:

The Lansing ACFE Winter Conference is **February 20th** and will be offered in-person in East Lansing and virtually! Topics include: Fraud Statistics, Detection, Prevention, Advanced Excel Data Analytics, Theft of \$450,000 – A Nickle at a Time, and Polygraph Information and Ethics. The event will provide 8 hours of CPE for attendees at just \$250 for active LACFE members! See details in *Upcoming Events*.

Don't forget to renew your LACFE membership! Remember that only paid members receive the discount for LACFE trainings. Find the membership form at: [Membership | \(lansingacfe.com\)](https://lansingacfe.com/membership)

Did you know?

February was added to the Roman calendar in 713 BC. The length of the month changed over time and, at one time, it had as few as 23 days. When Julius Caesar remade the Roman calendar, the month was assigned 28 days during normal years and 29 days during leap years which occurred every four years.

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Fraud Talk Podcast

How Fraud Week Transformed Community Engagement for the Washington State Auditor's Office - Brandi Pritchard - Fraud Talk - Episode 150

Join ACFE Public Relations Specialist Stefanie Hallgren in this episode of Fraud Talk, as she dives in with Brandi Pritchard, Assistant Director of Special Investigations at the Washington State Auditor's Office. With International Fraud Awareness Week on the horizon, Pritchard shares the story behind the Auditor's Office's dedication to fraud prevention and the unique challenges they face, especially within smaller government entities. From engaging tactics that bring fraud awareness to the community to the "trust but verify" approach that underscores their work, Pritchard reveals how Fraud Week creates a ripple effect inspiring both vigilance and accountability.

<https://acfe.podbean.com/e/how-fraud-week-transformed-community-engagement-for-the-washington-state-auditor-s-office-brandi-pritchard-fraud-talk-episode-150/>

UPCOMING EVENTS

LOCAL:

ACFE Southwest Ohio Chapter – Ignorance is Blitz (Case Study)

In-Person or Virtual

February 13, 2025

12:00 pm - 1:30 pm

Learn more: <https://swohacfe.org/event-5852166>



Lansing ACFE Winter Fraud Conference

In-Person or Virtual

Plante Moran 1111 E. Michigan Ave. East Lansing, MI 48823

February 20, 2025

8:30 am – 4:30 pm

Register now: https://www.lansingacfe.com/?page_id=90

SEMCACFE February Chapter Dinner Meeting

VisTaTech Center at Schoolcraft College, 18600 Haggerty Road, Livonia, MI 48152

February 6, 2025

Learn more: <https://semcacfe.org/meetinginfo.php?id=106&ts=1737649683>

NATIONAL:

ACFE Women's Summit

In-Person or Virtual

March 7, 2025

Learn more: [2025 ACFE Women's Summit](#)



ACFE Auditing for Internal Fraud

Virtual

March 11 - 12, 2025

(early registration ends February 10th)

Learn more: [Event Details](#)

ACFE Investigative Interview Techniques

Virtual

March 12 – 13, 2025

(early registration ends February 10th)

Learn more: [Event Details](#)

ACFE Conversations with a Fraud Factory Human Trafficking Survivor

Virtual

March 14, 2025

Learn more: [Event Details](#)

Help me create your newsletter! If you have an event that you would like posted or if you wish to share an article, please contact Jennifer Ostwald at jenny1661@hotmail.com

*The Lansing Chapter of the
Association of Certified Fraud Examiners*



2025 Winter Fraud Conference

~ Available Virtually or In-Person ~

February 20, 2025
8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

**Fraud Statistics, Detection, Prevention,
and Advanced Excel Data Analytics**

Theft of \$450,000 – A Nickle at a Time

Polygraph Information and Ethics

Plante Moran ♦ 1111 E. Michigan Ave. East Lansing, MI 48823



CONFERENCE DETAILS	
Conference Fee:	\$250 chapter members, \$285 non-members
Registration:	Through Friday, February 14, 2025
CPE Credit:	8 Hours
Dress:	Business Casual
Format:	Virtual or In-Person *
Lunch:	Provided On-site

** Please indicate your attendance preference upon registration.
In-Person seating is limited, so register today!*

Lansing Chapter of the ACFE

2025 Winter Fraud Conference

**Thursday, February 20, 2025
8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.**

Plante Moran – Main Conference Room
1111 E. Michigan Ave. East Lansing, MI 48823

Presented by Plante Moran:

Behind the Scenes: Local Fraud Case Insights

Join Plante Moran's forensic accounting team for an insightful session on recent fraud trends observed in local investigations. With permission from numerous clients, we'll delve into specific case details of the who (role), what, how, and for how much. This session will highlight commonalities across cases, provide valuable insights, and share compelling stories from the field.

Excel at Fraud Detection

Led by an Excel expert and former Plante Moran forensic accounting team member, this session will go beyond the basics and provide tips on a variety of intermediate skills, including macros, data manipulation with Get & Transform, fuzzy lookups, and more. This presentation will provide advanced data analytic techniques to detect fraud using Microsoft Excel and will help attendees build out Excel skills essential for any fraud examiner. Attendees will be provided a reference workbook to take with them and use as a review resource for analyzing their own datasets for anomalies and potential fraud.

Presented by Greg Wright:

Theft of \$450,000 - A Nickle At A Time

The Indianapolis Public Library embezzlement case is popular, especially with auditors and college finance classes. This case tracks the life of the embezzler: from her youth to the commission and discovery of the fraud, and through prison to her post-prison life. (Greg found her working at the Indiana University purchasing department in a sensitive position.)

Polygraph Information and Ethics

We will explore the history of the polygraph, including notorious espionage agents who have failed polygraph tests. We will discuss the accuracy and ethical concerns associated with polygraph testing, as well when they can and should be used, and how to respond if you are asked to take one. (Note: Although this presentation will provide an overview of countermeasures, it will NOT help you defeat a polygraph test.)

Register online at www.lansingacfe.com

For more information or for additional registration options, please contact: president@lansingacfe.org or vicepresident@lansingacfe.org.

Tip Of The Iceberg

January 27, 2025

By Larry Benson

<https://fraudoftheday.com/tip-of-the-iceberg-2/>

Success is very dependent on the quality of the information you get. Action based on reliable data not only makes it easier to execute decisions but lowers the rate of failure. After all, if key, accurate information is missing, decision making is reduced to nothing more than guessing. On January 15, 2025, the Treasury Department announced that over the last five months, it had successfully prevented and recovered \$31 million in Social Security payments that were marked...for dead people.

The Social Security Administration (SSA) maintains the largest collection of data on people who have died, which includes 142 million records that date back as far as 1899 – a database that has not been readily available to other government departments. But effective December 27, 2023, Congress has granted the Treasury temporary access to the Full Death Master File for a period of three years. The integration of SSA's high-quality death data resulted not only in improved timeliness and quality of data, but a 139% increase in the accuracy of payments.

The recovery of \$31 million is just the tip of the iceberg. By tapping into these records, the government will significantly reduce fraud, improve program integrity, and better safeguard taxpayer dollars. The Treasury projects that it will recover more than \$215 million during its three-year access period. Imagine what would happen if Congress granted permanent access to the Full Death Master File?

Great job by the Social Security Administration, Treasury Department, and the U.S. Congress working together to combat fraud.

Today's Fraud of The Day is based on article "US recovers \$31 million in federal payments to dead people" published by AP News on January 16, 2025

The U.S. government clawed back more than \$31 million in federal payments that improperly went to dead people, a recovery that one official said Wednesday was "just the tip of the iceberg."

The money was reclaimed as part of a five-month pilot program after Congress gave the Department of Treasury temporary access to the Social Security Administration's "Full Death Master File" for three years as part of the omnibus appropriations bill in 2021. The SSA maintains the most complete federal database of individuals who have died, and the file contains more than 142 million records, which go back to 1899, according to the Treasury.

Gov. Tim Walz announces legislative package targeting state fraud

January 4, 2025

By Aki Nace, Caroline Cummings

<https://www.cbsnews.com/minnesota/news/walz-legislative-package-fraud/>

Gov. Tim Walz on Friday set up a new fraud investigations unit and announced a package of other proposals aimed at cracking down on financial crimes that cost the state hundreds of millions of dollars.

"State government, in many cases, is used to being reactive to situations. We need to change that attitude to be much more proactive on this, and we need to give the tools necessary," Walz told reporters during a news conference.

The move follows the \$250 million Feeding Our Future scheme in which dozens of individuals were charged with stealing money intended to help feed hungry children in the pandemic and, more recently, a federal investigation accusing two autism centers of billing Medicaid for bogus claims. Some of those suspected of fraud related to the autism centers are linked to the Feeding Our Future case, a federal search warrant said.

Walz's plans include launching an artificial intelligence pilot program to flag potential problems early; increasing the attorney general's Medicaid Fraud Unit with nine new staff positions; broadening agencies' authority to halt payments to organizations and individuals suspected of stealing from public programs; and boosting penalties for "theft of public funds" crimes by 20%.

"These are not just financial crimes against the state and the taxpayers in Minnesota—these are crimes against children," Walz said. "It's simply unacceptable."

He also signed an executive order creating a centralized team to take on fraud cases within the state Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, merging the agency's existing unit with another at the Department of Commerce.

But the power of his pen only goes so far: He needs the state legislature to approve his other policy ideas. An anti-fraud push is expected to take center stage at the capitol when state lawmakers return for the 2025 legislative session in less than two weeks.

Republicans vow to roll out their own proposals to fight fraud—and that the governor is doing too little, too late.

"Creating a fraud bureau overseen by the same administration that allowed over a billion dollars in fraud means today's executive action is nothing but smoke and mirrors," said GOP House Speaker-Designate Lisa Demuth, R-Cold Spring, in a statement. "We need real change to crack down on fraud, and that starts with a process that is truly independent of the leadership that allowed fraud to run rampant over the last five years."

Walz's administration has come under fire for its handling of public programs. The nonpartisan Office of the Legislative Auditor in several reports has found a pattern of insufficient oversight to safeguard taxpayer money—from Feeding Our Future to one-time pandemic "hero pay" for first responders.

Federal prosecutors said that in that "brazen scheme of staggering proportions," employees of Feeding Our Future solicited and received bribes and kickbacks from sponsor sites that were supposed to serve meals to kids.

Walz also wants to make such actions a state crime.

Drew Evans, superintendent with the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, praised the executive order establishing the new anti-fraud unit and said it will enhance the state's ability to prevent, investigate and prosecute financial crimes.

"Bringing the state's top fraud and financial crime investigators together under that single structure pools our tools, expertise, and resources to create a consistent process that will strengthen every single investigation," he said.

Lawmakers must pass the next two-year state budget before the upcoming session ends. All of the legislative priorities Walz outlined Friday will cost \$39 million in the first two years and \$15 million in future years, the governor's office said.

In 2023, the DFL-led legislature took some actions aimed at boosting oversight within state agencies to curtail fraud, including adding an inspector general within the Department of Education, which oversaw the pandemic meal program at the center of the Feeding Our Future scandal.

Video of the Month

[Maple Grove Lawmaker To Head New House Anti-Fraud Committee](#)

Republican Kristin Robbins has been named chair of the Fraud Prevention and State Agency Oversight Policy Committee. The Minnesota House is creating this new committee in the wake of the \$250 million Feeding Our Future fraud scheme, which became the nation's largest pandemic fraud case.



Greenwashing: Misleading Consumers for Profit

January 14, 2025

By Abbie Staiger

<https://www.acfe.com/acfe-insights-blog/blog-detail?s=greenwashing-misleading-consumers-for-profit>

Beneath the glossy labels and vibrant packaging, a darker trend is emerging: greenwashing. This deceptive practice not only misleads consumers but also undermines genuine efforts toward environmental sustainability for a profit.

As the global push for sustainability gains momentum, consumers increasingly favor products and services that claim to be environmentally friendly. Companies are quick to respond, branding their offerings as “green,” “sustainable” or “eco-conscious.” However, beneath the glossy labels and vibrant packaging, a darker trend is emerging: greenwashing. This deceptive practice not only misleads consumers but also undermines genuine efforts toward environmental sustainability for a profit.

What is Greenwashing?

Greenwashing occurs when a company falsely advertises or exaggerates the environmental benefits of its products, services or practices. Unlike simple marketing puffery, greenwashing involves deliberate deception designed to exploit consumers’ trust and willingness to support eco-friendly initiatives. Examples include overstating the recyclability of packaging, claiming to use renewable energy without proof or falsely labeling products as organic or non-toxic.

According to the United Nations, “Through deceptive marketing and false claims of sustainability, greenwashing misleads consumers, investors, and the public, hampering the trust, ambition, and action needed to bring about global change and secure a sustainable planet.”

A Growing Problem

The rise of greenwashing coincides with an increased demand for sustainable products. A survey by NielsenIQ found that 78% of global consumers said a sustainable lifestyle is important to them. Unfortunately, some companies exploit this trend, placing financial gain above authentic environmental responsibility and ethical practices.

Greenwashing straddles the line between marketing malpractice and outright fraud. Under deceptive practices laws, false or exaggerated environmental claims can be subject to enforcement actions by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) under Section 5 of the FTC Act. While not classified as fraud in the legal sense, such deceptive practices can result in financial harm to consumers, who may pay premium prices for products or services they believe are sustainable, effectively defrauding them. For instance, a product advertised as “organic” or “100% recyclable” may cost more, yet its environmental benefits may be overstated or even nonexistent. This deception undermines consumer trust and diverts funds away from genuinely

sustainable innovations.

The financial repercussions of greenwashing extend beyond consumer harm. While companies engaging in these deceptive practices may enjoy short-term profits, the long-term costs can be devastating. Regulatory fines, lawsuits and reputational damage often follow exposure of the deception, as seen in high-profile cases. Additionally, such actions erode public confidence in corporate sustainability initiatives, creating a ripple effect that could jeopardize legitimate efforts to address environmental challenges.

Greenwashing is not merely a marketing ploy—it is a form of corruption that exploits consumer trust and undermines the integrity of sustainability efforts. By deliberately falsifying or exaggerating environmental claims, companies engage in deceptive practices that mirror other corrupt behaviors, such as fraud and bribery. These actions often involve circumventing regulations, manipulating data or even coercing third parties, such as certification bodies, to rubber-stamp unverified claims. This not only distorts markets but also erodes trust in environmental standards and institutions designed to promote accountability.

The corrupt nature of greenwashing becomes even more evident when companies use it to obscure unethical practices elsewhere in their operations. For example, while promoting the “Beyond Petroleum” campaign to position itself as a sustainability leader, British Petroleum (BP) continued to prioritize profits from fossil fuel extraction, often at the expense of worker safety and environmental integrity. BP spent heavily on green marketing to mask its expansion into oil and gas exploration in fragile ecosystems like the Gulf of Mexico and Alaska. Simultaneously, BP’s negligence in safety protocols led to catastrophic events, including the 2005 Texas refinery explosion and the 2010 Deepwater Horizon disaster. These incidents, coupled with record-setting fines for safety violations, highlight how BP’s greenwashing efforts not only attempted to mislead the public but also distract from its systemic exploitation of natural resources and disregard for human and environmental well-being.

BP’s past actions highlight how greenwashing can serve as a strategic tool for corruption, prioritizing profit and perception more than genuine environmental responsibility.

Red Flags of Greenwashing

To protect themselves, consumers and watchdog organizations should remain vigilant for signs of greenwashing. Red flags can include vague claims like “all-natural,” lack of certification or third-party verification, or the use of ambiguous terms like “sustainably sourced” without details. Additionally, greenwashing often involves selective disclosure, where companies highlight one eco-friendly aspect of their product while ignoring other harmful practices. For example, a company might advertise biodegradable packaging while maintaining a supply chain that relies on environmentally destructive practices. In 2009, the Coca-Cola Company introduced the “world’s first fully recyclable PET plastic bottle” made partially from plants. Despite the “PlantBottle” reducing reliance on fossil fuels for its production, Coca-Cola was still named the world’s top plastic polluter for the sixth consecutive year in 2023.

Combating Greenwashing

To tackle greenwashing, regulatory bodies and advocacy groups are stepping up enforcement. In the U.S., the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has issued updated Green Guides, which outline the dos and don'ts of environmental marketing. Globally, governments are enacting stricter disclosure laws, requiring companies to substantiate their sustainability claims.

For businesses, the message is clear: transparency and accountability are non-negotiable. Companies that genuinely commit to sustainability must back up their claims with measurable, verifiable actions, instead of slapping a sticker on their company that says “green” to gain a profit or cover up questionable practices.

Greenwashing is a reminder that eco-friendly claims by companies are just that — claims. For consumers, this underscores the importance of scrutinizing labels and seeking independent verification before making purchases. For companies, it highlights the risks of prioritizing perception over substance. Addressing greenwashing is not just about protecting consumers. It is about ensuring that genuine efforts toward sustainability are recognized and rewarded.

Quote of the Month

“Whether those claims are true or false is irrelevant. When we cross these lines, we are justifying behavior that we know is wrong precisely so that we can continue to see ourselves as honest people and not criminals or thieves. Whether the behavior in question is a small thing like spilling ink on a hotel bedspread or a big thing like embezzlement, the mechanism of self-justification is the same.”

— Carol Tavris, author of *Mistakes Were Made (But Not by Me): Why We Justify Foolish Beliefs, Bad Decisions, and Hurtful Acts*