



**Media Contact:**

Beth Strautz for STOP Foodborne Illness  
(773) 895-5387, [bstrautz@vagusagency.com](mailto:bstrautz@vagusagency.com)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**STOP FOODBORNE ILLNESS COMMENTS ON FIRST CRIMINAL SENTENCING  
FOR FOOD SAFETY FRAUD**

*Landmark Court Case Ends with Jail Time of 53 Total Years for Three Executives of  
Peanut Corporation of America (PCA)*

CHICAGO (Sept. 21, 2015) – After a long, difficult court case, three executives from the Peanut Corporation of America (PCA,) found guilty by a jury, have been sentenced: Stewart Parnell sentenced to 28 years in prison, Michael Parnell sentenced to 20 years, and Mary Wilkerson sentenced to 5 years jail time for their crimes. STOP Foodborne Illness, the leading national advocate for safe food, recognizes the significance of this landmark case involving individuals implicated in food safety negligence and fraud. PCA executives were found guilty of covering up positive lab tests showing peanuts were tainted with *Salmonella*, and continuing to ship contaminated product to vendors. These executives’ actions resulted in the 2008-2009 *Salmonella* outbreak that led to the deaths of nine Americans and the sicknesses of more than 700 people across 47 states.

Top executives at STOP Foodborne Illness commented that the sentencing would send a strong message to both the food industry and the victims of the outbreak.

**Deirdre Schlunegger, Chief Executive Officer:** “The momentous decision by the jury and judge marks a milestone in food safety history. These individuals are accountable for causing illness and death from a foodborne illness related to their product, and there are consequences. As an organization, our goal is to be part of the solution, and we regularly speak with food safety professionals and the government to keep the stories of those impacted at the forefront. Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims and their families.”

**Darin Detwiler, Senior Policy Coordinator, Food Safety:** “My own son died as a result of an *E. coli* outbreak more than 20 years ago. Though the executives responsible for that outbreak violated various laws, no criminal charges were ever filed against them. This decision will bring some closure to the victims of the PCA outbreak, as well as to those of other outbreaks. This decision will let them know that something is being done by our legal system to prevent outbreaks like these in the future.”

# # #

**About STOP Foodborne Illness ([www.stopfoodborneillness.org](http://www.stopfoodborneillness.org))**

STOP Foodborne Illness is a national, nonprofit, public health organization dedicated to preventing illness and death from foodborne pathogens. STOP Foodborne Illness achieves its mission by advocating for sound public policy, building public awareness, and assisting those impacted by foodborne illness.