



# DEBRA BOWEN

**CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE**

**NEWS RELEASE**

DB08:055

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**May 7, 2008**

**CONTACT: Kate Folmar**

**(916) 653-6575**

## **Secretary of State Debra Bowen Announces Conviction for Voter Registration Fraud in Orange County**

**SACRAMENTO** – A Sacramento-area signature gatherer has been convicted of three felony counts of voter registration fraud for registering people who were ineligible to vote in Orange County, Secretary of State Debra Bowen announced today.

Don Cornell Williams pleaded guilty Tuesday in Orange County Superior Court, where he was sentenced to 61 days in jail and three years of probation. While on probation, Williams is forbidden from participating in any voter registration or signature-gathering activities.

The Orange County Registrar of Voters alerted the Secretary of State's office in March 2006 of complaints from voters that signature gatherers were coercing them into re-registering to vote or were changing their party affiliation without their consent.

The Secretary of State's Election Fraud Investigation Unit's probe revealed that Williams, apparently motivated by a \$10 bounty for each new registered voter, improperly registered two teenagers not yet old enough to vote and one non-citizen who was ineligible to vote. In connection with the probe, Orange County District Attorney Tony Rackauckas charged 12 people with multiple counts of felony voter registration fraud. Williams was the ninth to plead guilty.

"Anyone who tries to register people who aren't eligible to vote will be caught in California," said Secretary Bowen, the state's chief elections officer. "I appreciate the work of Orange County Registrar of Voters Neal Kelley and his staff, and the dedication of Orange County District Attorney Tony Rackauckas in pursuing these important cases."

A warrant for Williams' arrest was issued in late 2006, but he wasn't located until earlier this year. In March, Williams was arrested on the campus of Sacramento State University after a member of the public contacted Secretary Bowen's office to complain about his signature-gathering techniques there. The Sacramento complaint did not result in charges against Williams, but it did lead to his arrest on the outstanding warrant.

The Secretary of State's Election Fraud Investigation Unit helps maintain the integrity of the electoral process by investigating allegations of election and voter fraud in California. Potential Elections Code violations brought to the unit's attention are thoroughly investigated and referred to law enforcement officials for prosecution when there is sufficient evidence of wrongdoing. The Secretary of State's office does not disclose information about the status of ongoing criminal

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investigations, but the information from a case that results in a criminal complaint filed by a county or state prosecutor is a public record.

Anyone who has witnessed a violation of the California Elections Code is encouraged to contact the Secretary of State's Election Fraud Investigation Unit at 1-800-345-VOTE or [http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections\\_fraud.htm](http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections_fraud.htm).

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