



# DEBRA BOWEN

## CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Probe by Secretary of State Debra Bowen's Investigators Leads to Felony Charges Against Hanford Man**

**SACRAMENTO** – Fresno County prosecutors today charged Stephen Chabak, a Hanford chiropractor and physical therapist, with four counts of election fraud following an investigation by Secretary of State Debra Bowen's fraud unit.

When he ran unsuccessfully for Coalinga City Council in November 2006, Chabak claimed on his candidate papers, which were filed with Fresno County under penalty of perjury, that he lived in Coalinga in Fresno County. An investigation by the Secretary of State's Election Fraud Investigation Unit, which led to the charges filed today, determined that Chabak's home was actually in Hanford, located in neighboring Kings County.

Fresno County Registrar of Voters Victor Salazar first forwarded citizen complaints about Chabak's residency to Secretary of State investigators in September 2006. The subsequent probe revealed that Chabak allegedly listed the Coalinga address of one of his physical therapy patients on all of his Coalinga City Council candidacy papers, when he actually lived with his family about 45 miles away. Chabak failed to earn one of three open Coalinga City Council seats in the November 2006 election.

"Election fraud is a serious matter, and this case is further proof that every possible violation of the law will be investigated in California," said Secretary Bowen, the state's chief elections official. "I applaud Victor Salazar and his staff for being vigilant and bringing the alleged fraud to the attention of my investigators."

Fresno County District Attorney Elizabeth Egan charged Chabak with four felonies: filing false candidacy papers (Elections Code Section 18203); fraudulent voting (Elections Code Section 18560); perjury (Penal Code Section 118); and filing a false instrument (Penal Code Section 115). The charges are punishable by up to three years in state prison.

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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 investigations, but the information from a case that culminates 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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