

DEBRA BOWEN

CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE NEWS RELEASE

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Secretary Of State Debra Bowen Announces Arraignment Today Of Sacramento Man Charged With Misusing Petition Information

SACRAMENTO – A Sacramento petition circulator is scheduled to be arraigned this afternoon on charges that include misusing address information from petitions to pursue a woman without her consent.

The Sacramento County District Attorney's office has charged John Edward James of Sacramento with one count of misusing petition signatures and another charge of perjury for allegedly falsifying the signature collection date on one of his petitions. His arraignment is scheduled for 1:30 p.m. today in Department 63 of Sacramento Superior Court at 720 Ninth Street in Sacramento.

The allegations against James first came to light last month, when a petition management company contacted the Secretary of State's Election Fraud Investigation Unit to report the woman's complaint. The company said James, one of its contract employees, had tried to pursue a romantic encounter with a woman who had signed some of his petitions outside a bank.

The fraud unit's investigation revealed that James and the woman had recognized each other as fifth-grade classmates and started chatting while in line at the bank. Once outside, the woman signed five initiative petitions James was circulating.

Around midnight that evening, James apparently retrieved the woman's address information from his petitions and visited her gated apartment complex. A security guard turned James away. The woman, who was unharmed, called police and reported the incident.

"The ability to participate freely in direct democracy is a longstanding tradition in California and it's a right that we must constantly protect," said Secretary Bowen, the state's chief elections officer. "By all accounts, this is an isolated incident of someone misusing signature information, but voters should know that elections officials vigorously guard their private information. I want to thank Sacramento County District Attorney Jan Scully for aggressively pursuing elections fraud cases."

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.

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