



DEBRA BOWEN

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Secretary of State Bowen Announces Arrest of Woman Charged with Forging Signatures on Nomination Petitions

SACRAMENTO –A Fresno woman was arrested today and charged with 30 felonies for allegedly forging voter signatures on nomination papers for two local candidates following an investigation by Secretary of State Debra Bowen's office. Darlene Holland was a campaign volunteer and was not compensated for collecting the signatures.

Fresno County Registrar Victor Salazar alerted the Secretary of State's office in March of suspicious signatures on the "Petition in Lieu of Filing Fee" petitions for candidates running for Fresno City Council and the Fresno County Board of Supervisors, which had been solicited by Holland. The signatures in question were not used to qualify the candidacy of either candidate, but were used to attempt to reduce the candidate filing fees.

Fresno County District Attorney Elizabeth Egan charged Holland with 30 counts of forgery, perjury and filing false documents. Holland could face a prison sentence if convicted.

"Forging signatures on any petition is a serious offense," said Secretary Bowen, California's chief elections officer. "This case serves as a reminder that my office takes every illegal action seriously. I applaud Fresno County Registrar of Voters Victor Salazar and his staff for alerting my office to the suspicious signatures, and Fresno County District Attorney Elizabeth Egan for vigorously pursuing the case."

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 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 (800) 345-VOTE (8683) or www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections_fraud.htm.

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