



NEWS RELEASE

CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE **BRUCE McPHERSON**

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Secretary of State Bruce McPherson Announces Joint Investigation with Attorney General Bill Lockyer

SACRAMENTO, CA - Secretary of State Bruce McPherson and Attorney General Bill Lockyer today announced the formation of a joint investigation into allegations of voter registration irregularities in Riverside and Orange counties. Secretary McPherson had previously opened his own inquiry into the allegations and requested the Attorney General's assistance.

"Ensuring that eligible voters have the ability to vote is my top priority," said Secretary McPherson. "This office has zero tolerance for fraud. I will continue to do everything within my power to make sure that the integrity of our democratic process is protected and the rights of our citizens are preserved."

"The right to free and fair elections is fundamental to our democracy," Lockyer said. "The allegations of voter fraud not only involve serious crimes, they also strike at the heart of our constitutional form of government. We will aggressively investigate these claims and vigorously prosecute those who broke state laws."

As the state's chief elections officer, the Secretary of State is in charge of overseeing the elections process and partnering with local election officials to ensure fair and accurate elections. McPherson's Elections Fraud Investigation Unit vigorously responds to allegations of voter fraud and recommending for prosecution of those who would corrupt the people's basic right to a free and fair election.

Under state law and the state Constitution, the Attorney General has concurrent jurisdiction with county district attorneys to enforce criminal laws. The state Elections Code establishes criminal penalties for specified acts of voter registration fraud. Although district attorneys are primarily responsible for investigating criminal wrongdoing within their own county, the Attorney General often will get involved where related acts of criminal conduct allegedly occurred in multiple jurisdictions.

Secretary McPherson is also sponsoring legislation to increase the penalty imposed to those who abuse the voter registration process. If passed, violators could be charged with a misdemeanor if they falsely represent themselves as having assisted a voter with registering to vote. Additionally, this bill would provide for a statement on the assistor section of the voter registration card that warns circulators of the crime of falsely representing having assisted a voter to register. This legislation creates accountability and transparency in our electoral process.

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To ensure that every eligible voter participates in the democratic process, Secretary McPherson has launched a month-long effort to inform Californians of the new federal and state laws affecting voters in 2006. Among these new laws is the requirement for voters to provide an ID card when registering or re-registering to vote. In addition, he will host training classes to educate the political parties, signature gatherers and other voter registration drives.