



NEWS RELEASE

CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE **BRUCE McPHERSON**

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VOTER FRAUD CHARGES FILED AGAINST TWELVE PEOPLE FOR UNLAWFULLY REGISTERING UNSUSPECTING PEOPLE TO VOTE

****Arrest warrants have been issued after a 5-month joint investigation between the Orange County District Attorney and California Secretary of State***

SANTA ANA, CA – Charges have been filed against ten men and two women for filing fraudulent California Voter Registration cards in Orange County. The California Secretary of State and the Orange County District Attorney conducted a 5-month joint investigation after receiving numerous complaints from citizens who were being registered and re-registered to vote without their knowledge. The following defendants were charged with the fraudulent completion of affidavit of registration: Daniel Bates, 36, Sal Castillo, 46, Christopher Dinoff, 31, Donahue Farrow, 34, Rick Floyd, 52, Jason Hayes, 19, Jason Holly, 36, Anthony Ogwo, 49, Daniel Ricca, 33, Jessica Sundell, 23, Don Williams, 45, and Susan Williamsen, 34. The maximum penalty on the charge is up to three years in prison.

Voter Fraud

In 2005, the Orange County Republican Party contracted with several petition companies and campaign coordinators to register new Republicans in Orange County in order to expand their party voter base. The companies and coordinators recruited solicitors or circulators to register new Republicans. They were paid \$10 for each new voter form, as well as bonuses for gathering petition signatures on statewide ballot initiatives. This practice is called the “bounty program” and is commonly employed by political parties to gain new membership.

In most cases, the frauds occurred in front of grocery stores or large retail establishments, such as Wal-Mart or Target, or on the campuses of Fullerton College and Santa Ana College. The circulators are accused of soliciting shoppers and students to sign petitions, usually in support of stricter sex offender laws or lower taxes, and unwittingly obtaining a signature on a voter registration card. The victims would sign the petitions and a voter registration form, but would not fill out the information on the rest of the form. The defendants are accused of acquiring the victims’ personal information, such as addresses and dates of birth, by checking their IDs and forging voter party registration information in the victims’ name without the victims’ knowledge or consent.

The circulators are accused of then sending the forms to the Orange County Registrar of Voters, which processed the cards and sent notices to the ‘new’ Republicans. When the victims received the notice, they complained to the Registrar of Voters.

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Investigation

The Registrar of Voters provided the voters whose registrations were switched with complaint forms and then sent the complaints and forged cards to the Secretary of State for investigation. The Secretary of State processed the forms and identified circulators; as the circulators had to put their own names on the forged cards in order to get paid. Their investigation ultimately revealed 12 defendants in Orange County who could be identified by multiple fraud victims.

The Orange County District Attorney's office conducted over 50 victim interviews to determine the circumstances of the fraud. Each victim showed the investigators what information they did and did not fill out on the registration forms and identified the defendants in pictures.

Arrest warrants were issued for 12 Orange County defendants and seven arrests have been made. As many of the defendants are transients, law enforcement faces a challenge in finding them and serving the arrest warrants. Defendants Farrow, Hayes, Ogwo, Ricca, and Williams have not yet been located. These defendants are urged to turn themselves in.

Senior Deputy District Attorney Dan Hess of the Felony Projects Unit is prosecuting this case.

The Orange County District Attorney and Secretary of State are requesting that anyone with additional information about this case contact District Attorney Investigator Baden Gardner at (714) 347-8496. Anyone who believes they have been a victim of voter fraud can contact the Secretary of State's Voter Fraud line at 1-800-345-8683 or the Orange County Registrar of Voters at (714) 567-7600.

Statement by the California Secretary of State

"As California's Chief Elections Officer, I have a zero tolerance policy for voter fraud. Our right to vote is one of our most precious rights that we hold as citizens, and I will continue to do everything in my power to ensure this right is protected and voter fraud is prevented," said Secretary of State Bruce McPherson. "It is wrong to falsify voter registration affidavits and mislead voters. I hope that this case causes others who are considering these criminal acts to think twice before acting."

Statement by the Orange County District Attorney

"This type of fraud can victimize people on different levels. It can interfere with First Amendment and voting rights of the voters who had their registration switched without their knowledge. The Republicans paid out money for phony registrations that were of no benefit to them. The Democrats could have been deprived of the right to have voters participate as official party members," stated District Attorney Tony Rackauckas.