



DEBRA BOWEN

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Secretary of State Debra Bowen Announces Felony Charges Against Sacramento County Woman

SACRAMENTO – Following a probe by Secretary of State Debra Bowen’s fraud investigation unit, Tanya Bowers of Rio Linda (Sacramento County) has been charged with two felonies for allegedly falsifying signatures on a Pacific Gas & Electric-sponsored regional petition.

In March 2006, Sacramento County Registrar of Voters Jill LaVine alerted Secretary Bowen’s office to suspicious signatures while processing a PG&E petition. After conducting an investigation, the Secretary’s Election Fraud Investigation Unit found that Bowers, a signature-gatherer hired by the proponents, appeared to have forged the names of five voters, including two who were deceased. Bowers earned 75 cents per signature, thereby earning \$3.75 from the allegedly fraudulent signatures.

The PG&E petition, which later became Measure H, sought to require existing Sacramento Municipal Utility District customer approval for any future SMUD annexations. The suspicious signatures were excluded as county elections workers tallied and validated petition signatures. The measure qualified for the ballot and voters approved it in June 2006.

“We cannot allow the integrity of the initiative process or the integrity of the electoral process to be undermined,” said Secretary Bowen, California’s chief elections official. “I want to thank Jill LaVine and the diligent Sacramento County elections team for catching these signatures.”

The Sacramento County District Attorney charged Bowers with one count of subscribing to a petition the name of another (Elections Code 18613) and one of filing a false or forged instrument (Penal Code 115). The charges are punishable by up to four years in state prison.

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 www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections_fraud.htm.

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