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NEWS RELEASE

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Pair Plead to Voter Fraud Scheme on Skid Row

A man and a woman pleaded guilty today for their role in a scheme where money and cigarettes were offered to homeless people on Skid Row in exchange for false and forged signatures on ballot petitions and voter registration forms, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

Harold Bennett (dob 4/17/65) entered his plea to one felony count each of circulating an initiative or petition containing false, forged or fictitious names, and registering a fictitious person. He was immediately sentenced to a suspended sentence of 16 months in state prison and placed on formal probation for three years.

Co-defendant Rose Sweeney (dob 12/11/75) pleaded guilty to two felony counts of circulating an initiative or petition containing false, forged or fictitious names. She was placed on formal probation for three years.

A suspended sentence may be imposed if a defendant violates the terms of his/her probation.

Deputy District Attorney Marian Thompson of the Public Integrity Division is prosecuting the case.

An indictment charged nine people in a scheme to solicit hundreds of false and/or forged signatures on state ballot petitions and voter registration forms by offering homeless people \$1 and/or cigarettes for their participation.

The crimes occurred during the 2016 and 2018 election cycles.

In July, Richard Howard (dob 1/12/56) and Louis Thomas Wise (dob 8/4/82) pleaded no contest to one felony count each of subscribing a fictitious name or the name of another to an initiative petition and registration of a fictitious person.

Christopher Joseph Williams (dob 5/2/79) and Nickey Demelvin Huntley (dob 9/2/74) each pleaded no contest to one felony count of circulating an initiative or petition containing false, forged or fictitious names.

Howard was immediately sentenced to a suspended sentence of three years in state prison and three years of formal probation. Wise was sentenced to a suspended sentence of 16 months in state prison and three years of formal probation.

Williams and Huntley were sentenced to three years of formal probation.

In February, co-defendant Norman Hall (dob 11/1/57) pleaded guilty to one felony count of circulating a petition with false, forged or fictitious names. He was immediately sentenced to one year in county jail, placed on formal probation for three years and ordered to complete 100 hours of community service.

Kirkland Washington faces voter fraud charges. He is scheduled to return to court on October 5 for a pretrial conference. Jakara Fati Mardis (dob 5/17/83) is at large.

Case BA475943 was investigated by the Los Angeles Police Department and the FBI's Los Angeles Field Office.

[About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office](#)

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to protecting our community through the fair and ethical pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of crime victims' rights.