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NEWS RELEASE

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Nine Charged in Large-Scale Voter Fraud Scheme on Skid Row

Prosecutors have charged nine people with a dozen felony counts for allegedly offering money and cigarettes 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 today.

Deputy District Attorney Marian Thompson of the Public Integrity Division said five of nine defendants are expected to be arraigned this morning in Department 30 of the Foltz Criminal Justice Center.

The charges include circulating a petition with false names; use of false names on a petition; voter fraud, registering a fictitious person; and voter fraud, registering a nonexistent person. Case BA472537 was filed for arrest warrant on Nov. 1.

The defendants are accused of engaging in the solicitation of hundreds of false and/or forged signatures on state ballot petitions and voter registration forms by allegedly offering homeless people \$1 and/or cigarettes for their participation, prosecutors said. The alleged offenses occurred during the 2016 and 2018 election cycles.

Charged in the criminal complaint are:

Kirkland Kauzava Washington (dob 7/29/80); Harold Bennett (4/17/65); and Louis Thomas Wise (dob 8/4/82) who each face eight counts. The defendants face a maximum state prison sentence of six years and four months, if convicted as charged.

Also charged are Richard Howard (dob 1/12/56); Rose Makeda Sweeney (dob 12/11/75); Christopher Joseph Williams (dob 5/2/59); Jakara Fati Mardis (dob 5/17/83); Norman Hall (dob 11/1/57); and Nickey Demelvin Huntley (dob 9/2/74) who each face four counts. If convicted as charged, the defendants face a maximum sentence of four years and eight months in state prison.

Defendants Washington, Howard, Sweeney, Williams and Hall are expected to be arraigned today.

Prosecutors have recommended that bail be set at \$25,000 for each defendant. The case remains under investigation 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.