



**Testimony of James O'Keefe
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**Before the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security & Government Affairs Hearing on
"Exposing Fraud in America"**

342 Dirksen Senate Office Building

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Chairman Paul, Ranking Member Peters, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify.

In February of 2026, I disguised myself as a homeless person and approached a petition circulator on Skid Row, near San Pedro and Sixth Street in downtown Los Angeles.

I saw cash clipped to his shirt which I thought was odd. The petition circulator told me, *"We gonna need 14 signatures,"* and *"we going to pay you two dollars."* This was in broad daylight, with dozens of other homeless people standing around.

These petition circulators are paid to gather signatures from California voters to get initiatives on the California ballot.

Right at that moment, one of our other reporters, who was also disguised as a homeless person, was talking to another petition circulator named, Brenda Brown Armstrong. Our camera recorded Brown handing over two dollars in cash as payment in exchange for a homeless person registering to vote in a federal election.

That is a federal felony. Congress expressly criminalized payments for "registration to vote" in covered federal elections. Why? Because the vote is sacred because it belongs to the citizen alone. It is an act of conscience, of judgment, and when it becomes contaminated by incentives – when it is for sale – it undermines the sanctity and fairness of the process to elect those who represent us. And as the Justice Department later said about this case, "False registrations undermine Americans' faith in elections — even more so when payoffs are involved."

We recorded Brown talking about the fraud she was committing, *"I'm paying you guys. I need to get paid too."* She said, *"I don't need you. You need me. I don't need you."*

She described the whole operation as a *"pyramid game."*

One of our reporters, disguised as a heroin addict with tack marks on his arm, asked the homeless, *"What's going on here?"* They replied with one word: *"Money."*

I later personally visited Brenda Brown Armstrong at her apartment in Marina Del Ray, where she voluntarily showed me completed petition packets and copies of voter registration forms she had collected.

The investigation ultimately contributed to a federal criminal prosecution. First Assistant U.S. Attorney Bill Essayli said, *"Once we saw these videos, we went to work."*

And then came the irony: in a neighborhood full of organizations supposedly there to protect the vulnerable, the person being confronted by the organization was not the fraudster — it was the reporter exposing the fraud.

Just minutes after we caught these felonies on camera, I was approached by a man who identified himself as being with the Los Angeles Police Department — and he began to record me. When I pressed him, soon afterward, he admitted he was actually with the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority.

Under California Penal Code section 538d - impersonating a law enforcement officer is illegal. So, this is also a form of fraud, covering for the fraud happening across the street.

Meanwhile, homeless residents themselves complained that they were being taken advantage of.

One homeless resident told us: *"They scheming, man. We out here poor as [expletive]. They making money off of it."*

Everything I'm saying to this committee is on video.¹

But it got worse.

We witnessed petition circulators giving marijuana in exchange for signatures on the ballot petitions. When one of the petition circulators was caught, he told our reporter: *"I'll knock your [expletive] ass. Don't come over here again. I'm gonna beat your ass."*

He threatened us. So, I knew we had to band together.

¹ PART 1 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XzISgxuUg7s>.
PART 2 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39NV4B5Mb2o>.
PART 3 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZBGxxVxBiYc>.
PART 4 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kknP8m0pCSM>.
PART 5 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XAPYvotrnhE>.

We decided to form a citizen-journalism justice league featuring Savannah Hernandez, Cam Higby, Anthony Rubin, and Jon Choe.

Together, over the course of a few weeks, we recorded 28 separate exchanges involving election petition circulators offering money, drugs, or other valuable goods in exchange for signatures. And what we found was so egregious that it transcended the partisan divide.

The Governor of California, Gavin Newsom, did not dismiss our report. His office said, *“This alleged activity is a felony in California. Anyone caught engaging in this activity should be investigated and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.”*

But what we found next would shock the conscience.

We recorded a fraudulent petition circulator pulling out a piece of paper with about a dozen names and addresses of actual registered voters. He then told us to sign in that voter’s name; Joseph Albright.

The petition circulator made sure the fraudulent name was spelled correctly, saying: *“If you mess up my paper, I can’t get paid.”*

The homeless person was then expected to forge the voter’s signature, which is a violation of California Elections Code section 18613.

Our reporter said, *“I have an Idaho address.”*

The petition circulator corrected him, saying: *“No, I’m gonna give you an address to write,”* and *“Your name is Robert.”*

Our reporter’s name was not Robert.

We recorded a petition circulator over the shoulder as he took out his phone and accessed an online database to pull these real registered voter names and addresses.

The fraudulent petition circulator selects Los Angeles, enters the zip code 90501, and then enters a generic name: *“Chris.”*

Because there is a “Chris” in almost every zip code, these search parameters gave him multiple real voters named Chris. The petition circulator told a man named Adam, *“I’m giving you a new name.”*

You can see in the video the website the fraudster was using: something called sigvalid.com.

My team attempted to access that site, but we were met with a login page. Which raises the obvious question: how did this individual get access?

To try and answer that question, we visited the residences of the real people whose names were being used to commit the fraud.

One of those names on the ballot petition was Vicky Walker. The homeowner at Vicky Walker's address told me he had lived there for approximately nine years and still regularly received ballots and election mail addressed to Vicky Walker.

In fact, he told me he had received so many ballots for so many years that he eventually named his cat "*Vicky Walker*" after this mysterious person.

Another voter, when we showed that her name and signature had been used, reacted with shock and said, "*What if I wanted to vote in that referendum?*"

This fraud is taking away that voter's constitutional rights, – their civil rights – it's disenfranchising them, and that is why, the Governor of California, the Los Angeles Mayor's Office, the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office and the U.S. Department of Justice, all issued statements condemning the actions of these fraudsters.

When we returned to ask for comment from the man who had been offering drugs in exchange for signatures — the same individual who had threatened us earlier – he grabbed the petitions and ran away from us, apparently to hide them in his car. When we caught up to him, one of his associates charged at our producer, Andrew, and punched him in the neck. Then two men, charged at me. Right before they struck us, Cam Higby, member of the Justice League, deployed pepper spray in self-defense. With pepper spray in their eyes, the two men continued to attempt to assail my news crew. At that point, my producer Braden and I had no choice but to run — sprinting a dozen blocks through skid row back to our parked vehicle to escape this threat to our life.

Brown has been indicted by the Department of Justice, but to this day all the other fraudsters that committed felonies in the State of California, remain free.

This is not a political issue. It is not even a partisan issue. It is not a conspiracy theory. And it is not circumstantial evidence.

Everything I have testified about before this Committee is recorded on camera.

The question before this Committee is not whether this fraud exists. The question is why the incentives allow it to flourish.

There is money in fraud.

There is no money in exposing the fraud.



When laws are ignored without consequences, fraud becomes the incentive.

Fraud becomes the model of life.

Tony Moore, one of the coordinators for ballot petitions, said it plainly to us: *“If there are no consequences to what they’re doing, it doesn’t matter.”*

And that is the point.

I don’t have subpoena power; us journalists don’t have the power to do anything but expose.

They campaign in this building about freedom and protecting democracy, preventing disenfranchisement, and how nobody is above the law. But if those principles are not enforced when they are violated in broad daylight, they are not principles at all. They are slogans.

And without accountability, our notion of freedom is just an illusion.

Thank you.