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July 29, 2020: Four Plead to Voter Fraud Scheme on Skid Row

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Four men have admitted 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 today.

Richard Howard (dob 1/12/56) and Louis Thomas Wise (dob 8/4/82) pleaded no contest Friday 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. A suspended sentence may be imposed if a defendant violates the terms of his/her 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, codefendant 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.

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

The four remaining defendants face various charges including use of false names on a petition and voter fraud.

The defendants were charged with soliciting 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 indictment indicates the crimes occurred during the 2016 and 2018 election cycles.

Three of the remaining defendants are scheduled to return to court for a pretrial hearing on September 1 in Department 108 of the Foltz Criminal Justice Center. 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.

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