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## **Campaign worker pleads guilty to felony forgery on minimum-wage petition**

Peter Marcus  
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A Denver man has pled guilty in connection with collecting fraudulent signatures to place the successful minimum wage increase on the November ballot.

Angelo Felix Abad, 61, pled guilty on Jan. 12 to one count of felony forgery, according to court records. A separate charge of misdemeanor perjury was dropped by state prosecutors.

Abad is scheduled to be sentenced on April 7 in Denver District Court. Sentencing could range from probation up to six years in prison.

The charges stemmed from Abad's work collecting signatures to place the gradual minimum wage increase on the ballot. Proponents submitted a whopping 189,419 signatures last July, far above the 98,492 valid signatures needed to make the ballot.

Voters in November backed the proposal with 55 percent support.

The Secretary of State's Office last August flagged the potential for forged signatures and referred the case to the Attorney General's Office. The initiative still easily made the ballot.

Proponents of the minimum wage hike maintain that they had more than enough signatures to qualify for the ballot, despite any small amount of forged signatures. Only one signature was called into question during the investigation.

Abad worked for the Washington, D.C.-based canvassing firm Fieldworks, which was hired by proponents to collect signatures.

News reports over the summer showed that Abad had previous criminal convictions. He also denied the initial allegations.

State prosecutors lauded the guilty plea.

"We take seriously any reports we receive about alleged election fraud, and our office will always thoroughly investigate those claims and prosecute when appropriate," read a statement from the AG's office, which was provided to [ColoradoPolitics.com](http://ColoradoPolitics.com). "In this case, the facts warranted charges against Mr. Abad, and he subsequently chose to plead guilty to a felony count of forgery."

Other forgery cases also plagued the recent election.

Perhaps the most high-profile case was a woman who pled guilty to submitting fraudulent signatures on behalf of failed U.S. Senate candidate Jon Keyser. He was a rising star in the Colorado Republican Party, and several observers believe the fraud allegations contributed to sinking his run.

Maureen Marie Moss, 45, pled guilty to two counts of forgery in November. She was hired by Black Diamond Outreach to collect signatures for Keyser to place his name on the June primary ballot. Moss also had a previous criminal background, including forgery, according to reports.

She is scheduled for sentencing on Friday morning in Denver District Court.

State lawmakers are likely to take a look at the fraud issue in the legislative session. The Secretary of State's Office can verify names and addresses on a petition, but it does not have the authority to disqualify a potentially fraudulent signature. Lawmakers may try to change that.

In the meantime, opponents of the minimum wage increase, which will rise gradually to \$12 per hour by 2020, say it's unfortunate that fraud took place in the process.

"Just as millions in out-of-state union dollars sold a fraudulent case to voters, they also used fraudulent signatures to get the measure on the ballot," said Tyler Sandberg, a spokesman for opponents, which was largely led by the business community.

"The difference is while the canvasser will go to jail for the fraudulent signatures, it will be small businesses, school districts and rural communities facing the consequences for the unions' fraudulent campaign."

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