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**DISTRICT ATTORNEY INVESTIGATES “MISLEADING” TACTICS IN
REAL ESTATE-BACKED POLITICAL CAMPAIGN IN PACIFICA**

Evidence surfaces that signature gathering campaign bankrolled by landlord and real estate lobbyists would have failed but for allegedly misleading statements

Pacifica, CA – The District Attorney is investigating reports of misrepresentations made by paid signature gatherers during a referendum campaign in Pacifica sponsored by the real estate industry. In May 2017, an industry-backed referendum narrowly repealed a temporary renter protection ordinance by a margin of only 63 signatures. Fair Rents 4 Pacifica, an all-volunteer tenants’ rights group, has gathered evidence that at least 66 Pacifica voters have sought to remove their signatures. Nearly all claimed they only signed because they had been misled by signature gatherers.

“Big Real Estate has spent big money to distort the democratic process in our small town,” said Thursday Roberts, a volunteer with Fair Rents 4 Pacifica. “Their paid signature gatherers made voters think the referendum would benefit renters but instead it opened the door to massive rent hikes and unjust evictions. And it didn’t stop there. The real estate lobby is still throwing money around to publicize false statements in our upcoming city election – they’ve already spent over \$300,000 to plaster the town with misinformation about a rent stabilization measure on this November’s ballot. They need to be held accountable.”

Earlier this year, the Pacifica City Council called a special election for November 7, 2017 to allow residents to vote on an ordinance to slow rent increases and halt no-cause evictions, known as Measure C. Around the same time, the City Council passed a temporary moratorium to prevent rent gouging and no-cause evictions before the November election. The referendum campaign under investigation by the District Attorney and sponsored by the real estate lobby blocked this temporary moratorium from going into effect. As a result, renters in Pacifica have faced exorbitant rent hikes and a wave of evictions.

“My landlord raised my rent by nearly \$600 over the summer. I’m barely able to hold on and keep my family in Pacifica,” said Larry Hixson, a long-time resident. “The temporary moratorium would have prevented this rent increase. It’s frustrating to learn that the referendum never should have succeeded, and that so much money has been spent confusing voters.”

“I signed the referendum because the signature gatherer made me think that it supported rent stabilization,” said Blaine Dunday, a Pacifica resident. “When I learned the truth, I tried to get my signature withdrawn. These dirty tricks have no place in Pacifica. Residents should follow the money and learn the truth before casting their votes this November.”

Fair Rents submitted a complaint to the District Attorney requesting an investigation into potentially unlawful tactics used during the signature gathering campaign. The complaint alleges that paid signature gatherers may have violated state elections law by making misleading statements to voters. During the past two years, similar allegations have been made in real estate-funded referenda campaigns to overturn tenant protection laws in Richmond, Santa Rosa, and Alameda. The California Apartment Association and the San Mateo County Association of Realtors have claimed responsibility for the Pacifica referendum campaign currently under investigation. The same groups and their affiliates are the main backers of the ongoing campaign against the rent stabilization ballot measure (Measure C), which will be voted upon next week.