

# **Attachment A**

Real Estate Fraud Prosecution  
Program Fiscal Year 2018-2019  
Annual Report



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**District Attorney's Real Estate Fraud Prosecution Program  
Fiscal Year 2018 - 2019 Annual Report**

**Cases**

- *People v. Anthony Allen Robinson and Heather June Robinson*

Based on reports from the Lompoc Police Department, the Contractor's State Licensing Board, and numerous citizen complaints, the District Attorney's Real Estate Fraud (REF) Unit investigated allegations against a Lompoc couple, Anthony Allen Robinson and Heather June Robinson. The investigation culminated in the couple being charged with 24 felony counts including Securities Fraud, Diversion of Construction Funds, Grand Theft, Offering a False Instruments for Recording, and Conspiracy to Commit Unlicensed Contracting. Special Allegations alleging excessive taking were also filed.

After the case was filed, the District Attorney's Office identified numerous potential additional victims. Based on an exhaustive investigation, the District Attorney's Office filed a 73-count information. The information included 35 different victims, and charged all the counts in the complaint plus money laundering, unlawful money transmission, fraudulent use of an access card, and fraudulent use of a contractor's license number. The victims in this case are from Castaic, which is located in Los Angeles County.

- *People vs. Lisa Maria Hornick*

This case involves an elderly victim who loaned \$100,000 to an acquaintance. The People allege that the defendant committed a theft the loan proceeds, and have charged the defendant with felony counts of Grand Theft, Elder Abuse, and Money Laundering. The People have also filed Special Allegations alleging Money Laundering in excess of \$2 million dollars. The defendant pled guilty to grand theft and money laundering in excess of \$1,000,000.00. This was the first ever conviction in Santa Barbara County of money laundering at a casino.

- *People vs. Brandy Taylor*

This investigation involved an Orange County company which, for a fee, offered to stop foreclosures. They operated throughout California, Arizona, and Nevada. In reality, this company was not actually stopping foreclosures but rather postponing them by employing a complex "bankruptcy hijacking" scheme.

In October 2016, the REF Unit coordinated with Alameda County District Attorney Investigators, Orange County DA, the Bureau of Real Estate, and Huntington Beach Police to serve search warrants in Orange County associated with this case. Defendant Brandy Taylor was later arrested on a \$360,000 warrant issued by Santa Barbara County, and a \$1 million dollar warrant issued by Alameda County.

As of the *Fiscal Year 2018-19 Real Estate Fraud Prosecution Program Annual Report*, this case was at the trial stage. Since that time, the defendant pled guilty to the charges in Alameda County has was given probation. The case is pending prosecution.

- *People vs. Bretton Warren*  
Based on a citizen complaint, the REF Unit investigated an allegation that Bretton Warren was threatening to record fraudulent mechanics liens against a former client. Felony charges of Extortion, Forgery, and Filing a False Workman's Compensation Claim were ultimately filed against the defendant. This case is pending prosecution.
- *People v. Mark Melchiori*  
In association with Sheriff Detectives, the REF Unit investigated allegations against local contractor Mark Melchiori of Melchiori Construction. The investigation culminated with Melchiori being charged with 47 felony counts including Diversion of Construction Funds, Theft by Embezzlement, and Labor Code section 1778 (a form of theft from employees). Special Allegations alleging excessive taking were also filed. The District Attorney's Office filed a motion to freeze Melchiori's assets pending the outcome of the prosecution. This case was pending prosecution during Fiscal Year 2018-2019.

## **Highlights**

- The REF Unit spent a significant amount of time at the County Clerk-Recorder-Assessor's Office during Fiscal Year 2018-2019. Three years ago, a protocol was implemented wherein the District Attorney's REF Investigator would make personal contact with individuals attempting to record false documents in order to stop a foreclosure. The REF Investigator would educate these individuals on the laws that apply to such transactions, and warn them of the consequences associated with attempting illegal recordings. These efforts have resulted in a significant decrease in the number of fraud referrals as compared to prior fiscal years.
- The District Attorney's REF Unit continued its outreach to the local and statewide real estate industry in both formal and informal settings. The District Attorney's REF Unit gave presentations to the Santa Barbara County Association of Realtors, on the radio, and to the County Recorders' Association of California.

## **Statistics**

- Total number of referrals: 13
- Total number of investigations: 13
- Total number of cases filed: 0
- Number of convictions obtained in the fiscal year: 1