



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF TULARE

Tim Ward, *District Attorney*

PRESS RELEASE

7/19/19

**TCDA BUREAU OF INVESTIGATIONS MAKES ARRESTS FOR
WELFARE, AUTO INSURANCE FRAUD**

Earlier this week, criminal investigators from the District Attorney's Bureau of Investigations served 32 total felony arrest warrants on suspects wanted for allegedly committing welfare and auto insurance fraud in Tulare County.

The following 28 individuals were arrested and booked into the Tulare County Pre-Trial Facility or cited for welfare fraud:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| -Mayra Alcauter, 22, of Tulare | -Katherine Benitez, 29, of Ivanhoe |
| -Richard Esparza, 43, of Visalia | -Tamara Harmon, 27, of Visalia |
| -Guadalupe Centeno, 20, of Visalia | -Maurice Lacy, 37, of Visalia |
| -Kay Lopez, 41, of Porterville | -Guadalupe Martinez, 47, of Porterville |
| -Jazelle Padilla, 25, Visalia | -Selena Renteria, 35, of Visalia |
| -Fabiola Rivas, 44, of Visalia | -Isabel Robles, 51, of Visalia |
| -Elaine Sanchez, 53, of Dinuba | -Alma Sanchez, 20, of Porterville |
| -Octavio Silva, 32, of Visalia | -Diana Vorhies, 49, of Visalia |
| -Arturo Cabrera, 24, of Farmersville | -Erika Alcantar, 40, of Porterville |
| -Jose Sanchez, 44, of Porterville | -Elvira De La Cruz, 41, of Farmersville |
| -Vanessa Johnson, 44, of Visalia | -Lisa Agundis, 19, of Porterville |
| -Jorge Gonzalez, 21, of Farmersville | -Jessica McKay, 19, of Tulare |
| -Socorro Campos, 69, of Visalia | -Pamela Goldstein, 41, of Visalia |
| -Brittany Dowdy, 25, of Visalia | -Sheila Bell, age 32, of Porterville |

The total amount of alleged welfare fraud in all of these cases was \$261,023.00.

In 2018, the District Attorney's Bureau of Investigations identified \$989,685 in fraudulent benefits, resulting in felony criminal charges being filed on 85 cases. The fraudulent activity in these cases included activities such as failing to report income, failing to report changes in household composition, and the trafficking of EBT benefits for financial gain.

During the same time period, investigators served four felony arrest warrants on suspects wanted for allegedly committing auto insurance fraud in Tulare County. The following individuals were arrested and booked into the Tulare County Pre-Trial Facility or cited:

-John Martinez, 29, of Ivanhoe
-Joseph Crumm, 53, of Visalia

-Kristy Sandoval, 43, of Ivanhoe
-Ismelda Orozco, 51, of Visalia

The total amount of alleged auto insurance fraud in all of these cases was \$8,301.00.

Since last summer, the District Attorney's Bureau of Investigations received over 70 referrals and reports alleging fraudulent auto insurance claims. The fraudulent activity in these cases included activities such as obtaining coverage for a vehicle after an accident has occurred, false reporting a vehicle theft or accident for financial gain, and claimant fraud such as false reporting of the driver of a vehicle or other circumstances related to a claim. It is a felony for an individual to make a false statement or misrepresentation of material facts in order to obtain over \$950 of insurance claims that they were not entitled to receive.

Penalties for fraud can range from suspension or elimination of benefits, restitution, probation, and jail or prison terms.

"Fraud and abuse hurts everyone, from putting funds necessary to help the truly needy in jeopardy, to insurance rates going up for consumers," said District Attorney Ward.

If the public has further information related to suspected fraud, contact the Bureau of Investigations at (559) 636-5410.

*Media inquiries can be directed to the Office of the District Attorney, County of Tulare
Assistant District Attorney Dave Alavezos (559) 636-5494*