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Costa Mesa Woman Who Illegally Registered Her Dog to Vote, Casted Mail-in Ballots Sent to Dog in Two Elections Required to Pay for Anti-Voter Fraud Billboards as Part of Case Resolution

Canine's vote in California's 2021 gubernatorial recall election was successfully counted; 2022 primary election ballot was rejected.

Santa Ana – A Costa Mesa woman charged with five felonies for illegally registering her dog to vote and casting ballots in her dog's name in the 2021 California gubernatorial recall election and the 2022 primary election has had her case dismissed after pleading guilty to one misdemeanor count of knowingly registering a nonexistent person to vote and paying for four anti-voter fraud billboards featuring the photo of her dog she posted to social media bragging

about her crimes. The dog's vote was successfully counted in the 2021 gubernatorial recall election but was rejected in the 2022 primary.

Laura Lee Yourex, 64, of Costa Mesa, was charged in September 2025 with one felony count of perjury, one felony count of procuring or offering a false or forged document to be filed, two felony counts of casting a ballot when not entitled to vote, and one felony count of registering a non-existent person to vote.

On October 28, 2024, the Orange County District Attorney's Office was contacted by the Orange County Registrar of Voter's Office about a resident who self-reported that she had registered her dog to vote and had in fact cast a mail-in ballot she received addressed to her dog, Maya Jean Yourex, for the 2021 gubernatorial recall election and the 2022 primary election.

According to the California Elections Code, in order to vote a person must be registered as a voter by filling out and submitting an Affidavit of Registration which includes the voter's name, residence, mailing address, date of birth, political party preference and a certification that the voter is a citizen of the United States. The affidavit must be signed under penalty of perjury.

Proof of residence or identification is not required for citizens to register to vote in state elections nor is it required to cast a ballot in state elections. However, proof of residence and registration is required for first-time voters to vote in a federal election. As a result, the 2022 primary ballot cast in Maya Jean's name was challenged and rejected. The 2021 election to recall California Governor Gavin Newsom was voted down by 61.9% of voters.

Following an investigation by the Orange County District Attorney's Office Bureau of Investigation, sufficient evidence was discovered to file criminal charges against Yourex for illegally registering her dog to vote and then casting mail-in ballots issued to her dog based on the fraudulent voter registration. On her social media, Yourex posted in January 2022 a picture of her dog wearing an "I voted" sticker and posing with her ballot. Another post from October 2024, showed a photograph of Maya's dog tag and a vote-by-mail ballot with the caption "maya is still getting her ballot" even though the dog had previously passed away.

On April 10, 2026, District Attorney's Office dismissed four of the felonies and reduce one of the felonies to a misdemeanor as part of a plea agreement. On April 10, 2026, Yourex pleaded guilty to one misdemeanor for knowingly registering a non-existent person to vote and wrote in her plea agreement signed under penalty of perjury:

"On or about 5/7/20, in Orange County, I did willfully and unlawfully cause an animal, to wit: a dog, to be registered as a voter, knowing that animal was not entitled to registration as a nonexistent person, and mailed and delivered that affidavit to a county elections official."

As part of the plea agreement, Yourex was also required to pay \$1,500 for four anti-voter fraud billboards along the 55 and 22 freeways in Orange County which will be posted until the November 3, 2026, midterm election. The billboards read, "Don't be a dog. Voter Fraud is a Crime. If you can't legally vote, don't vote. The Orange County District Attorney's Office will

prosecute.” The billboards feature the photo Yourex posted of her dog Maya Jean posing with her ballot addressed to her and wearing an “I voted” sticker along with the District Attorney’s Election Fraud Hotline 714-721-7578.

As a result of Yourex completing the terms of the plea agreement, her case was dismissed in its entirety on October 13, 2026.

Anyone with information regarding any suspected election-related irregularities is asked to call the Orange County District Attorney’s Election Fraud Hotline at (714) 721-7578 or by emailing Elections@ocdistrictattorney.gov

Deputy District Attorney Heather Heslep-Morrissey of the Special Prosecutions Unit prosecuted this case.

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