



County of San Bernardino

Ensen Mason • Auditor-Controller/Treasurer/Tax Collector

NEWS RELEASE – For Immediate Release

February 20, 2019

MASON TACKLES GOVERNMENT FRAUD, WASTE AND ABUSE

San Bernardino, CA — San Bernardino County Auditor-Controller/Treasurer/Tax Collector (ATC) Ensen Mason today released the first ever ATC Fraud, Waste and Abuse (FWA) Hotline Report. The report covered calendar year 2018 and is the first of an ongoing series of annual FWA Hotline reports to the public.

“Communication with the public as well as stopping government fraud, waste and abuse are my fundamental priorities in office,” noted Mason. “The public has a right to know what this office is doing to clean up San Bernardino County government. We serve as their watchdog over misuse of taxpayer dollars and fraudulent spending practices. Members of the public are encouraged to call our Fraud, Waste and Abuse (FWA) Hotline at 1-800-547-9540 or email us at fraudhotline@atc.sbcounty.gov to file a report if you see these types of things happening. We will investigate and get to the bottom of the problem.”

The FWA Hotline received 86 cases in 2018. The most common categories of complaint were welfare fraud, other fraud, employee relations, customer relations policy issues and accounting/audit irregularities.

Sixty-one cases were closed after investigation and 25 remained open into 2019. Of the 61 cases closed in 2018, twenty-nine cases were referred to the appropriate county department for action, 22 were determined to be unfounded or not sustained, five were sustained after investigation and appropriate action taken, one was referred for legal action, one was exonerated and three occurred in other jurisdictions and were referred by ATC for action there. Forty-six of these cases were resolved by ATC staff within 90 days, 13 cases took between 91 and 180 days, and two cases took between 181 and 270 days. No case took more than 270 days to resolve.

Case investigations covered a wide range of problems. One fraud case concerned allegations that a County department had mishandled a federally funded project, and then attempted to cover up this mishandling by deliberately making inaccurate statements on official project documents. The investigation revealed that critical design elements were missed by the contractor in bidding for the contract, necessitating a change order. The change order and resulting extra costs to the County would not have been necessary if the designers had followed

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proper quality control and quality assurance procedures. Closer quality control procedures were put in place as a result of this audit to ensure this type of shoddy business practice doesn't happen again. Another case involved allegations that a sub-recipient of contract funds from the Department of Public Health had created false medical records and treatment plans. Investigation revealed that the records in question were incomplete and non-compliant with important quality control requirements, thus endangering patients and public health. The employee at the center of these allegations was terminated.

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