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**D.A. BROWN: FORMER BROOKLYN PROSECUTOR CHARGED
WITH PROVIDING WITNESS INFORMATION TO DEFENSE ATTORNEY**

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown, acting as a special prosecutor, today announced that former Kings County assistant district attorney Sandra Fernandez has been charged with providing a defense attorney – a former Brooklyn prosecutor who is now her husband – with information with respect to prosecution witnesses in two criminal cases in which he represented the defendants.

District Attorney Brown said, “It is extremely disheartening when a prosecutor charged with upholding the law is accused of violating the law. The defendant’s alleged actions represent a serious breach of the public trust and should not be lightly regarded.”

District Attorney Brown said that Judge Neil Firetog, the Administrative Judge for the Criminal Term of the Supreme Court in Brooklyn, signed an order on February 16, 2007, appointing him as a special prosecutor to handle the matter.

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Sandra Fernandez, 35, of Queens. Fernandez, who was employed as a Brooklyn assistant district attorney from September 2001 until her termination in February 2007, will be arraigned later today in Brooklyn Criminal Court on a 12-count complaint, charging her with four counts each of first-degree offering a false instrument for filing, second-degree falsifying business records and official misconduct. If convicted, she faces up to four years in prison.

District Attorney Brown said that, according to the criminal complaint, all assistant district attorneys in the Kings County District Attorney’s Office requesting a criminal history check of individuals must submit a form entitled “NYSPIN [New York State Personal Identification Number] Information Request” to a NYSPIN operator. The form warns in boldface print that “any information obtained from the NYSPIN System is confidential and should not be made to available to non-Kings County District Attorney employees.” Such NYSPIN request forms are kept on file with the Kings County District Attorney’s Office.

The complaint alleges that Fernandez, who was an assistant district attorney assigned to the Brooklyn District Attorney’s Domestic Violence Bureau, completed and submitted a NYSPIN

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request form on June 8, 2006, for the criminal history and Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) information of a female witness by providing the witness's name, date of birth and gender and falsely indicating that the matter related to an assault case assigned to her. Similarly, it is alleged that on November 2, 2006, Fernandez filed two NYSPIN request forms for the criminal history and DMV information of a female and male witness, and again falsely indicated that the matters related to one of her assigned cases. In submitting the requests, it is alleged that Fernandez initially only submitted the male witness's name to the NYSPIN operator, but four days later submitted a second request – this time with the witness's personal data.

Finally, the complaint alleges that none of the individuals was a named witness in any prosecutions assigned to the defendant Fernandez. Rather, it is alleged, the female and male witnesses were prosecution witnesses in a Brooklyn criminal case in which the defendant's then-fiancé Douglas Rankin represented the defendant and that the female witness, whose background was checked in June 2006, was a prosecution witness for a case in Queens in which Rankin also represented the defendant

The investigation was conducted by Detective Joseph Brancaccio and Sergeant Evelyn Alegre of the District Attorney's Detective Bureau under the supervision of Lawrence J. Festa, Chief Investigator, and Albert D. Velardi, Deputy Chief Investigator, and by Paralegal Taranne T. Tiles.

Assistant District Attorney Carmencita N. Gutierrez, Deputy Bureau Chief of the District Attorney's Integrity Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of James M. Liander, and the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Peter A. Crusco and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney Linda M. Cantoni.

It should be noted that a criminal complaint is merely an accusation and that a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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Note to Editors: Press release e-version posted at www.queensda.org.