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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: February 9, 2012 **Contact:** Steve Mount, Assistant Chief Deputy District Attorney
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West Sacramento woman convicted of Worker's Compensation Insurance Fraud

(Woodland, CA) – February 9, 2012 - District Attorney Jeff Reisig announced that on February 8, 2012, a Yolo County jury convicted 58- year-old Linda Vela, a resident of West Sacramento, of seven counts of Worker's Compensation Insurance Fraud, three counts of Presenting False Statement Concerning Payment From An Insurance Policy, and two counts of Attempted Perjury, in connection with disability claims made between March of 2005 and February of 2007.

In August of 2003 Vela, a 25 year veteran employee of the Sacramento Bee newspaper, went out on disability and was diagnosed with bi-lateral carpal tunnel syndrome. She had surgery on her right wrist in June of 2004 which by all objective signs was successful. Vela, however, complained that she was still in pain after the surgery and that she could not go back to work despite the surgeon's recommendation that she could return to work. Based on Vela's stated complaints of pain, and her reported inability to use her hands, her physician kept her off work as "totally disabled." As a result, Vela received Worker's Compensation Benefits from McClatchy Newspapers, the parent company of the Sacramento Bee, as well payment from Liberty Mutual Insurance Company, through which Vela had a long term disability policy, and was able to receive 70% of her pre-disability salary tax free.

Vela told various doctors the she was "in constant pain," and that she "could not use her hands for any basic use," and that "even a fork was heavy" to her. She also stated that she could not work in her garden or brush her own hair. However, during that same time frame, Vela was caught on video doing many of the things she said she couldn't do including brushing her long hair, gardening and holding a video camera at eye level for 30 minutes straight. An orthopedic specialist who viewed the surveillance video testified that it was completely contrary to her presentation and complaints of pain and that she "could return to work" with the only restriction being that she "avoid power gripping and torquing."

Vela should have been able to return to some type of employment with the Bee in December of 2004. The Bee has a policy of finding alternative work for its injured employees, but Vela's embellishments prevented them from bringing her back to work.

Sentencing is set before the Honorable Judge Stephen L. Mock on March 23, 2012.

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