

Glitch in petition stalls Danner recall effort

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SANTA CRUZ — Leaders of the drive to recall District Attorney Art Danner have decided to shoot for the March 1996 ballot, rather than an earlier special election.

Deciding when to get the issue on the ballot "is like looking into a crystal ball," said Bob Lamonica, a leader of the Coalition To Recall Danner.

The decision not to seek the special election was influenced in

part by a glitch that will delay start of the Coalition's petition drive by three weeks.

Coalition leaders planned to start the drive tomorrow, but were told by elections officials there were minor technical and gram-

matical errors in the petition that need to be corrected.

County elections officials have until April 21 to document those errors and any others, and the Coalition will have another 10 days to correct them.

If everything goes smoothly, the petition drive can start May 5, said Gail Pellerin, county elections manager.

To force an election, recall proponents must gather 14,100 signatures in 160 days. To get the issue

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to a special election in November, proponents would have to gather those signatures by mid-June.

Lamonica said recall proponents had thought they'd have a better chance of recalling Danner at a

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special election, figuring those strongly in favor of the recall would be more inclined to vote.

But having a special election close to the general election March 26 could alienate voters because of the cost, Lamonica said.

The March election is the presidential primary, which used to be held in June. There is no general election this November.

The recall drive was prompted by Danner's dismissal last year of attorney Catherine Gardner after she admitted ingesting what she thought was cocaine. She said it was under duress from an abusive

boyfriend.

Danner kept Gardner on the payroll, without requiring her to work, for three months before firing her. He said he was trying to work out a settlement; recall proponents said he wanted to keep the issue quiet during his June reelection campaign.

Danner won a fifth term, defeating Ed Frey for the second time. Frey is a leader of the recall campaign, and has filed a suit asking that Danner be forced to reimburse the county for the money paid Gardner when she didn't work.

Danner has said the recall is led by "a small number of individuals with political or personal agendas."