

UP FRONT

Coalition Seeks Recall of District Attorney

✓ *District Attorney*

WITH THE STROKE OF HIS PEN ON THE first line of the first of 2,000 recall petitions, Bob Lamonica formally set in motion May 5 the latest challenge against Santa Cruz County District Attorney Art Danner. While supporters watched approvingly on the county courthouse steps, Lamonica signed his name and reduced by one the 14,100 signatures needed to force a recall election of the county's top law-enforcement official.

The symbolic moment came during a press conference called to launch the recall campaign.

"We're talking about principles," exhorted Lamonica before signing the petition. "We're talking about whether abuse of power will be tolerated." Lamonica heads the Coalition to Recall Danner, a loose-knit group that has met over the past few months in an effort to drum up support for a recall campaign. Notable members include failed district attorney candidate Ed Frey and homeless advocate Robert Norse.

The coalition is trying to accomplish what vitriol, lawsuits, Board of Supervisors' hearings and a regular election in the last year could not — namely, ousting Danner from public office. A manifesto produced by the group, called "Danner's List," alleges widespread malfeasance on the part of the district attorney.

"I find the office very hard to deal with," said Dennis DuBois, a member of the coalition. "They seem to prosecute on what is expedient, not on what is just."

88 signatures a day

In order to achieve its goal, the coalition will first need to gather 14,100 signatures from county residents, representing 10 percent of registered voters. They have 160 days to do so, meaning they must receive an average of 88 names, addresses and signatures a day. Lamonica said the coalition now has 10-20 people working on signature gathering and predicted that the group would be successful in its effort.

"We're going to get our 14,100 signatures," he vowed.

Lamonica said he would target UCSC and Watsonville in gathering signatures. "There will be a push in the coming weeks on campus. . . . That's a good block to go after," he said.

If the coalition is successful, the county elections department, upon verification of the signatures, will notify the Board of Supervisors, which is ultimately responsible for authorizing recall elections. County Clerk Richard Bedal said that if the coalition achieves its goal, the supervisors would likely try and avoid a costly

special election by pairing the recall election with the March 1996 primary. Bedal said a simple majority of residents must vote against Danner and vote for an alternative candidate in order to remove him from office.

Danner's counteroffensive

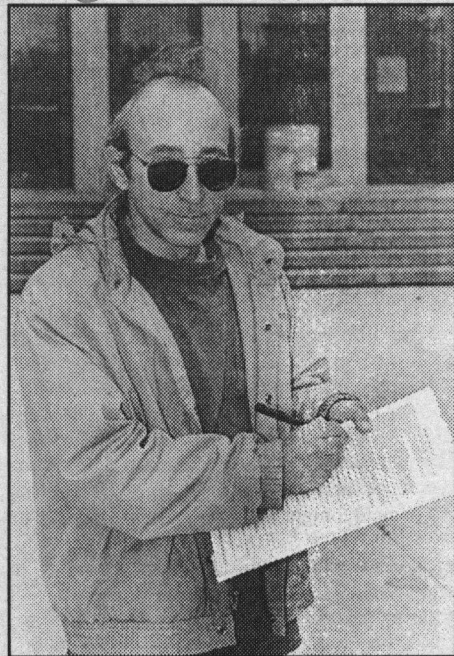
For his part, Danner launched a counter-offensive against the coalition in the form of a press release dated May 5. "The core members of the Recall Coalition are a small group of people who have an obsession with their own personal agenda as disgruntled defendants or alleged victims in the criminal justice system or supporters of my unsuccessful opponent in the last election who just can't let go of that election result," the statement read.

Danner defended his record as district attorney and accused the coalition of spreading "inaccurate, misstated, incomplete" and nonsensical information about him.

He reiterated his belief that making enemies comes with the territory. "After 16 years as district attorney I can't expect not to make a few enemies," he said.

This is believed to be the first effort to recall a district attorney in this county.

— Matt Davidson



DAVID ALEXANDER

Bob Lamonica of the Coalition to Recall Danner prepares to sign the first petition.