



**GREGORY D. TOTTEN**  
**District Attorney**

**NEWS RELEASE**

vcdistrictattorney.com

Twitter: @VenturaDAOoffice

---

Contact: Chrystina D. Jenson  
Senior Deputy District Attorney  
Telephone: (805) 654-2550  
E-mail: chrystina.jenson@ventura.org  
Approved: MDS *[Signature]*  
Date: Friday, March 15, 2019  
Release No.: 19-018

**Multiple Defendants Plead Guilty in Separate Auto Insurance Fraud Cases**

*VENTURA, California* – District Attorney Gregory D. Totten announced today that multiple defendants pled guilty on March 14, 2019, in separate auto insurance fraud cases prosecuted by the Auto Insurance Fraud Unit of the Ventura County District Attorney's Office.

- Raymond Merkley (DOB 10/22/78), of Woodland Hills, pled guilty to presenting a fraudulent auto insurance claim and admitted previously sustaining two prison priors. In November 2016, while illegally off-roading in Hungry Valley State Park, Merkley's truck suffered significant damages. Afterwards, Merkley repeatedly lied to his insurance carrier about when and how the damages occurred. Merkley will be sentenced on May 29, 2019, in the Ventura Superior Court, County of Ventura. Due to his prior convictions for which he served prison time, Merkley faces up to 10 years in custody in this case.
- Manuel Abrego (DOB 3/1/87), of Thousand Oaks, and Felix Hernandez (DOB 10/16/78), of Oxnard, pled guilty to arson and auto insurance fraud. On March 2, 2017, firefighters from the Oxnard Fire Department were called to a suspicious car fire. It was later determined that the car belonged to Abrego and that he previously paid Hernandez to burn the car to obtain insurance money. Abrego and Hernandez will be sentenced on April 25, 2019, in the Ventura Superior Court, County of Ventura. Both men face up to 5 years 8 months in prison for their respective roles in the fraudulent scheme. At the time of the plea, Abrego paid full restitution of \$14,846 to State Farm Insurance, \$1,193 to the Oxnard Fire Department, and \$660 to Toyota Motor Corporation.

- Kellina Pelletier (DOB 3/7/78), of Ventura, pled guilty to two counts of auto insurance fraud stemming from an Easter-day car accident on April 16, 2017. Pelletier will be sentenced on April 25, 2019, in the Ventura Superior Court, County of Ventura. At the time of her plea, Pelletier paid \$769 in full restitution to AAA Insurance.

###

The Ventura County District Attorney's Office is the public prosecutor for the county's 850,000 residents. The office employs approximately 280 employees including attorneys, investigators, victim advocates, and other professional support staff who strive to seek justice, ensure public safety, and protect the rights of crime victims.

Follow the Ventura County District Attorney's Office on Twitter @VenturaDAOoffice