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## **CUSD trustees face new recall bid**

### **Citizens group says it will try to collect 20,000 signatures for each of four targeted Capistrano board members.**

**By SAM MILLER THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER**

Parents and residents say they will again try to recall four Capistrano Unified trustees, saying the trustees have allowed a "culture of corruption" and "grossly mismanaged finances" in the county's second-largest school district.

At an afternoon board meeting Monday, the group known as CUSD Recall served trustees Sheila Benecke, Mike Darnold, Marlene Draper and Duane Stiff with an intent to circulate petitions.

That starts an approximately six-month timetable for the parents to collect more than 20,000 signatures per trustee.

The trustees accepted the notices silently and retired without comment to a scheduled closed-session meeting.

"We have no control over what this group of people may choose to do," trustee Sheila Benecke said. "Our job as elected members of the school board is to make sure that our children get the finest education we can provide them, and that's where our concentration will be."

An effort to recall all seven members of the board failed in 2005.

Parents critical of trustees' decision to build a new administration building, rather than replace portable classrooms, collected signatures but fell thousands short of qualifying for a ballot.

Since then, two trustees were defeated in a general election, and a third targeted trustee did not run for re-election.

In May, former Superintendent James Fleming was indicted on suspicion of using taxpayer dollars and confidential student records to keep lists of political opponents. He is scheduled to be arraigned July 13.

"You failed to effectively control your staff – even giving your former superintendent a standing ovation," recall proponents wrote in the official notice.

The trustees have repeatedly called for the community to move past the controversies. Board members have taken action to commission an investigation into allegations of wrongdoing, held public meetings to address concerns about facilities spending and adopted broader policies on conflicts of interest.

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