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NEWS RELEASE

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Statement from District Attorney Erik Nasarenko on Governor Newsom's Decision to Commute Death Sentences

VENTURA, Calif. – Governor Newsom's decision to commute existing death sentences in California directly impacts the families of 15 victims in Ventura County. These were the most heinous and horrific crimes in our county over the past fifty years, and the victims' families have endured unimaginable loss, grief and suffering.

These death sentences were imposed after a jury carefully considered the evidence, facts and circumstances of each individual case. They represent years of courtroom proceedings, appeals and judicial review.

Life without the possibility of parole is a severe punishment, but it was not the sentence determined in a courtroom for these 15 cases, and it replaces the decision-making authority of the judge and jury with gubernatorial discretion. That is what the California Constitution allows, but our responsibility as prosecutors is to seek justice, stand with victims and their families and uphold the rule of law and will of the voters. As the California Supreme Court reviews many of these commuted sentences, I encourage the justices to carefully evaluate each eligible case and reach its own independent decision.

The Ventura County District Attorney's Office is the public prosecutor for the county's 850,000 residents. The office employs approximately 300 employees including attorneys, investigators, victim advocates, and professional support staff who strive to seek justice, ensure public safety, and protect the rights of crime victims.