



COUNTY OF YOLO
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
JEFF W. REISIG, DISTRICT ATTORNEY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Woodland Man Denied Parole

(Woodland, CA) - July 27, 2018 - Yolo County District Attorney Jeff Reisig announced that on July 26, 2018, a two-commissioner panel of the Board of Parole Hearings denied parole of Jose Mendiola-Ponce of Woodland. Mendiola-Ponce agreed that he was not suitable for release and in doing so avoided a parole hearing. This was Mendiola-Ponce's first parole opportunity since being sentenced to life in prison.

On August 10, 2008, after a night of drinking at La Finca restaurant, Mendiola-Ponce offered to drive his friends, Fabian Perez and Martin Ledesma home. Shortly after leaving, Mendiola-Ponce drove his jeep at a high rate of speed into a tree causing the vehicle to roll onto its roof. Mendiola-Ponce was found seatbelted in, upside down and smelling of alcohol. The passenger side of the jeep was severely damaged. Fabian Perez was pronounced dead at the scene from blunt head trauma. Martin Ledesma was airlifted to the hospital and suffered a fractured leg, liver lacerations and internal injuries requiring the removal of his spleen. The investigation determined that Mendiola-Ponce was intoxicated and fell asleep while driving.

On August 14, 2009, a Yolo County jury convicted Mendiola-Ponce of Vehicular Manslaughter while intoxicated, Driving Under the Influence Causing Injury, and Driving Without a License. The jury also found that Mendiola-Ponce had been previously convicted of two prior DUIs, one of which caused injury. The trial judge sentenced Mendiola-Ponce to 15 years-to-life in state prison.

In anticipation of the parole hearing, a licensed psychologist conducted a risk assessment and determined that Mendiola-Ponce posed a high risk for violence if granted parole. While in prison, Mendiola-Ponce was disciplined multiple times for rules violations and was convicted of assault with a deadly weapon on another inmate in 2015. The psychologist concluded that Mendiola-Ponce lacked insight into his substance use history and the need for treatment.

Rather than undergo a full hearing to determine suitability for release, Mendiola-Ponce stipulated, or agreed, that he was not suitable for release at this time. The Board of Parole Hearing commissioners accepted the stipulation and denied parole for a three year period.

California Highway Parole Commissioner W.A. Stanley wrote a letter opposing release citing Mendiola-Ponce's failure to participate in any alcohol treatment since 2012 believing that failure to adequately address his alcohol abuse makes him "a threat to the community and state if released at this time."

Yolo County District Attorney Jeff Reisig stated that he is proud of the efforts of his Lifer Parole Division. "We will oppose any release efforts of inmates who fail to positively program and lack insight into their addiction issues where release puts the public at risk."

Jose Mendiola-Ponce will be eligible for a new parole hearing in 2021, however, the law permits him to request an earlier hearing date.

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