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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Resentencing Denied for Man Convicted for his Part in Murder of
California Highway Patrol Officer Andrew Stevens
Gregory Zielesch Conspired with Stevens' Murderer Brendt Volarvich**

(Woodland, CA) – January 22, 2026 On January 21, 2026, the Honorable Daniel M. Wolk denied the resentencing of Gregory Zielesch, 67, that would have reversed his murder conviction for his role in the murder of California Highway Patrol Officer Andrew Stevens on November 17, 2005. Zielesch was also previously convicted of conspiracy to commit murder; weapons, ammunition, and drug charges; along with an out on bail enhancement. Volarvich was convicted of conspiracy to commit murder and first-degree murder; along with an enhancement for the use of a firearm. Zielesch was sentenced to 57 years to life in prison and Volarvich was sentenced to death.

As of January 1, 2019, changes were made to the “Felony Murder Law” and the doctrine of “Natural and Probable Consequences” requiring the prosecutor to prove those tried for murder acted with malice. In other words, malice could not be imputed on an individual based upon their participation in a lesser crime, if the individual was not the actual killer. Additionally, convicted murderers could petition the court to re-examine their convictions to ensure they were convicted under a currently valid theory of liability. Mr. Zielesch argued that he could no longer be guilty of murder because he did not harbor malice against Officer Stevens and that Volarvich, who pulled the trigger, was solely responsible.

During the hearing, the District Attorney argued that the murder of Officer Stevens occurred as the result of an agreement that, in return for Zielesch bailing him out of jail days earlier, Volarvich would murder a local Woodland man due to his involvement with one of Zielesch’s former love interests. Zielesch provided Volarvich with a firearm and he was on his way to commit that murder when he was pulled over by Officer Stevens.

Zielesch acted with malice when he conspired to murder the intended victim. He was very well aware that Volarvich was a convicted felon, that he abused methamphetamine, and that he possessed a “mentality” for murder. Zielesch also knew that Volarvich was highly resistant to returning to prison. Arming an unstable, drug-using, convicted felon with a firearm poses grave risk to the general public in and of itself. Providing that same felon with instructions and a monetary incentive to commit murder elevates that risk to critical levels. Zielesch was aware that there was a high probability that his actions would result in the death of another human being. Indeed, he intended that these actions would certainly result in the death of a specific human being. However, this intent to kill a specific victim is not a necessary component of implied malice aforethought. The District Attorney further contended that there is no moral distinction between an individual who unlawfully kills an intended victim and one who unlawfully kills an unintended victim while failing to kill the intended target.

On December 19, 2025, Judge Wolk found that Zielesch’s role in the case demonstrated that he harbored malice and still could be convicted of murder. Zielesch’s conspiracy to commit murder conviction remains intact and was not a part of these proceedings.

Despite his sentence of 57 to life, Zielesch is eligible for parole after serving 25 years under California’s Elder Parole law. He is tentatively eligible for a parole suitability hearing in May of 2031. Volarvich’s conviction is still pending the automatic appeals process.

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