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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: December 16, 2015
Re: Terry Jean Harrison

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Terry Jean Harrison, 59, was found suitable for parole at a December 10th hearing of the State Board of Parole Hearings in Chowchilla.

Harrison planned with her two sons and two of their juvenile friends to rob someone to buy methamphetamine. The robbery took place in late June 1995. The robbery crew found 74-year-old William Smith sleeping in his car. The males beat him and shoved him in the trunk as Harrison watched, and then Harrison drove them back to her home. During the ride, Smith made noises in the trunk, and Harrison repeatedly slammed on the brakes to stop him.

After they got home, Harrison told an acquaintance she did not know what to do with Smith, who was still in the trunk. The acquaintance and others took Smith away, killed him, and hid his body in an irrigation pipe.

Harrison, who has significant health issues, told the parole board she was responsible for the murder and should not have involved her children or herself in the "evil" activities that led up to the murder.

The parole board set the release date at February 13, 2022 due to the terrible nature of the murder, but Harrison will be released December 25, 2016 by operation of law because of new legislation passed this year.

Senate Bill 230, which takes effect January 1, 2016, removed the use of a sentencing matrix, which considered the gravity of the crime and other factors. The revised parole sections provide for prompt release, or release at the minimum eligible parole date. In Harrison's case, her minimum eligible parole date is Dec. 25, 2016.

Deputy District Attorney John R. Mayne appeared at the hearing and argued for continued confinement based on the nature of the crime and defendant's multiple prison violations during her first decade in prison. The board considered Harrison a low risk based on a psychologist's report and Harrison's much-improved behavior and use of prison programs over the last decade.

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