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PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Date: October 17, 2008

Re: Trunzo parole grant

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Modesto, California – Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Russell Trunzo age 51 , was found suitable for parole at an October 15 hearing of the State Board of Parole Hearings conducted at San Quentin State Prison. The Parole Board had convened a special hearing to address a recent court ruling by the Honorable Donald E. Shaver. Judge Shaver granted Trunzo's request to reverse the Board's 2007 decision denying parole and ordered the Board to release Trunzo from prison. Senior Deputy District Attorney Doug Maner appeared at this hearing and objected to Trunzo's release because he still poses an unreasonable threat to the community due to his lack of rehabilitation, lack of insight into the factors which caused him to commit murder and untruthful statements minimizing his responsibility to previous Parole Boards.

The Attorney General's Office, which handles parole board litigation, declined to appeal Judge Shaver's decision to release Trunzo from prison, and the Parole Board had no choice but to comply with the court's orders. The Governor's office will review the Parole Board's decision granting parole and the District Attorney's Office will urge them to keep Trunzo incarcerated until he no longer is a threat to the community.

Trunzo killed his girlfriend's two year old baby four days before Christmas in 1978 because the baby had soiled his diapers and was having difficulty with potty training. Trunzo at first denied striking the child, claiming that he fell and hit his head. Later, he admitted shaking the child and accidentally causing his head to strike the toilet seat. After the first versions were proven to be false, Trunzo admitted to losing his temper and slapping the baby several times in the head. The baby had extensive bruising over most of his body consistent with a prolonged, severe beating. The pathologist who examined the baby found evidence consistent with physical abuse that occurred weeks prior to his death.

Evidence at Trunzo's trial established that he did not call for help after rendering the child unconscious and that there was at least a fifteen minute delay until help was summoned to the crime scene by the child's mother.

Trunzo was convicted of second degree murder in 1979 and was sentenced to fifteen years to life in prison. He has had eighteen subsequent parole hearings. At all of these hearings he has failed to admit full responsibility for this crime. The District Attorney's Office argued that Trunzo's inability to completely admit his responsibility for the crime showed that he did not understand the factors that caused him to kill and there was too great a risk that he would re-offend. If the Governor's office does not overturn the Board's decision, Trunzo plans to reside with his family in a Northern California county - not Stanislaus.

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