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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: August 15, 2019
Re: Billy Joe Ensminger
Attempted carjacking conviction and
prison sentence

For More Information Contact:

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Billy Joe Ensminger, age 37, of Modesto, was sentenced on July 31, 2019, to serve 16 years in state prison. Deputy District Attorney Jeff Mangar appeared on behalf of the People.

On August 30, 2018, at approximately 1:30 a.m., Ensminger approached the victim and his girlfriend while they were sitting in a car and talking in the Travelodge parking lot in Turlock. He got into the rear seat behind the victim, placed the muzzle of a handgun against the victim's back and told the victim to get out, but to leave the keys. As the victim stepped out, Ensminger, keeping the gun pointed at the victim's chest, moved into the driver's seat. When he realized the keys were not in the car, Ensminger got out and chased the victim into the motel lobby.

The victim's girlfriend called police who responded and found Ensminger hiding in another motel room. A handgun and ammunition were taken as evidence. Hotel security video captured the entire incident as it unfolded.

In December of 2018, a Stanislaus County jury convicted Ensminger of attempted carjacking while using a firearm. A prior residential burglary conviction and prison term for auto theft were found true in a separate court trial held earlier this year.

Ensminger has seven prior felony convictions since 2000 for such crimes as auto theft, residential burglary and possession of drugs in prison which occurred in Tuolumne, Lassen and Stanislaus counties.

Judge Scott Steffen sentenced Ensminger to serve 16 years in state prison. Attempted carjacking is considered a violent offense under California law requiring that he serve at least 85% of that time in actual custody. It is also a "strike" under California's "Three Strikes Law" that can be used to increase the punishment for any felony convictions that Ensminger may receive in the future.

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