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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: September 2, 2020
Re: Craig Christopher Leon
Three Strike Inmate Denied Parole

For More Information Contact:

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Modesto, California – Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Craig Christopher Leon, age 58, was denied parole today at the conclusion of a hearing by the Board of Parole Hearings held at the Mule Creek State Prison in Ione. Deputy District Attorney John Goold appeared at the hearing on behalf of the People.

On the morning of December 12, 2004, Craig, who was on parole from prison at the time, was driving his pickup truck near Third and J Streets when he almost struck a marked Modesto Police car. Craig was stopped for the traffic violation and a parole search of the pickup yielded 11.53 grams of heroin. Craig was charged and convicted of felony transportation of heroin / possession for sale of heroin along with two prior robbery convictions from 1989 and 1992 which counted as “strike” convictions under California’s Three Strikes law. He was sentenced to 25 years to life in state prison in 2006.

Craig is a longstanding career criminal with convictions for robberies, burglary, possession of stolen property and drug crimes. He has also been arrested for various sexual offenses including rape and indecent exposure. Craig had been sent to prison twice before and had violated felony probation and state parole numerous times before receiving his life sentence in 2006.

During the hearing today, Craig admitted to the board that he started using drugs when he was 14 years old because “it was easy”. Although he had marketable job skills, as an adult he continued to sell and use heroin rather than work to earn money. He told the board that he had been getting high his entire life and liked the feeling drugs gave him over everything else.

Since being in prison, Craig committed six rule violations and received five counseling notices, some of which he denied or did not remember. A comprehensive risk assessment by a prison psychologist opined that Craig poses a moderate risk of violence to the community if he were to be released on parole.

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Deputy District Attorney Goold appeared at the hearing and argued against Craig's release on the grounds that Craig had no viable parole plans, no relapse prevention plan, no idea how he would earn money outside of prison, and no letters of support or acceptance into transitional housing. Goold also noted Craig's lack of understanding into the reasons behind his criminality.

After deliberations, the Board denied Craig's release on parole for a period of three years. He may petition the board for an earlier date if circumstances warrant it. This was Craig's first parole hearing.

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