



Office of the District Attorney Stanislaus County

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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: March 26, 2021
Re: Monroe Walter Burns
Third Strike Life Inmate Denied Parole

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Modesto, California- Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Monroe Walter Burns, age 54, was denied parole at the conclusion of a March 11, 2021, hearing by the Board of Parole Hearings held at the Correctional Training Facility in Soledad, California. Deputy District Attorney Kirk Brennan appeared at the hearing on behalf of the People.

Burns's prior criminality included drug and alcohol abuse, possessing drugs for sale and carrying a firearm. At age 20, he was involved in a shootout with another criminal who tried to rob him of his drugs. In 1990, Burns was convicted in San Mateo County of kidnapping and robbery with use of a firearm and sentenced to state prison. Upon his release, he was paroled back to San Mateo County but stopped reporting to his parole officer causing a warrant to be issued for his arrest.

On October 8, 1999, police were dispatched to a Modesto store for a reported shoplifting. When a police officer and Loss Prevention Agent contacted Monroe outside the store, he took a stolen doorknob lock set from his pants and threw it at the Loss Prevention Agent, striking him in the head and causing a gash above the eye. He was arrested for the theft and assault as well as the San Mateo County warrant for absconding from parole.

On August 8, 2000, Burns was convicted by a Stanislaus County Superior Court jury of felony assault and felony petty theft with a prior conviction of theft. He was also found to have been previously convicted of robbery and kidnapping, both "Strike" offenses under California's Three Strikes law making him eligible to receive a life sentence in state prison. On September 7, 2001, Judge Hedegaard sentenced Burns to 26 years-to-life with the possibility of parole.

On March 15, 2016, Burns successfully petitioned the court to reduce his conviction for felony petty theft with a prior conviction for theft down to a misdemeanor under Proposition 47. This did not affect his life sentence for the assault with a deadly weapon conviction and he remained incarcerated in state prison.

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Since being in state prison, Burns has repeatedly violated prison rules including disobeying an order, possessing methamphetamine and heroin to sell to other inmates, possessing a cellphone and overdosing on cocaine. A comprehensive risk assessment by a prison psychologist who interviewed Burns on January 5, 2021, gave the opinion that Burns still represented a moderate risk for future violence to society if he were to be released on parole. The psychologist stated that during the interview, Burns tended to minimize the severity of his past behaviors and had problems accepting responsibility for his actions.

During the March 11th hearing, prosecutor Brennan argued against Burns's suitability for release on parole. He noted that Burns's disclosures to his evaluating psychologist and to the Board of Commissioners during the hearing was less than credible, particularly with respect to minimizing his past drug use and sales while in prison and that Burns lacked insight into the causative factors for his criminal past. He also noted that Burns's parole plans were inadequate and seemed to involve illegal sovereign citizen real estate activities.

After deliberating, the Board denied parole for three years, finding that Burns still poses an unreasonable risk to public safety and was not suitable for release into the community. The Board agreed that Burns's testimony before the board lacked credibility with respect to his drug and cell phone use while in prison and that he was still exhibiting criminal thinking.

This was Burns's first parole hearing. He may petition for an earlier hearing in less than three years if he can show a change in circumstances.

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