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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: November 30, 2023
Re: Craig Christopher Leon
Three Strikes Life Inmate Granted Parole

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Jeff Laugero announced today that Craig Christopher Leon, age 61, of Turlock was found suitable for parole at a September 14, 2023 State Board of Parole Hearing at the Mule Creek State Prison in Ione. Deputy District Attorney Holly MacKinnon appeared at the hearing on behalf of the People.

On February 1, 2006, Leon was found guilty by a jury verdict of a violation of Health and Safety Code sections 11352(a) and 11352, transportation of a controlled substance, and possession of a controlled substance for sale. Leon had two prior serious felony convictions for robbery and was on parole at the time of his arrest. Leon had violated that parole numerous times prior to this offense. On March 24, 2006, Leon was sentenced to 25 years-to-life in state prison under California's "Three Strikes" law.

During the parole hearing, Prosecutor MacKinnon argued against Leon's release on parole and for continued confinement based on the inmate's lengthy criminal history and his lack of sufficient substance abuse programming and his lack of adequate internalization of that programming.

At the conclusion of the hearing, the Board of Parole Hearings granted parole, finding that although they would like to see more internalization of his programming, Leon did not pose an unreasonable risk to public safety. The Board noted Leon had not received any rule violation since 2014 and had actively participated in programming including substance abuse, AA/NA, and self-help programs. In addition, the Board felt he had a release plan which included transitional housing and community support which mitigated any safety risk he may pose. As conditions of parole, the Board ordered that Leon provide proof to his parole agent of continued substance abuse programming and that he be assessed by mental health services.

Although sentenced to serve 25 years-to-life in prison under California's "Three Strikes" law, recent changes to the law made Leon eligible for early release after serving 18 years despite his extensive prior criminal history of robbery, and poor performance on supervised release. Specifically, his early parole consideration was mandated by the passage of Proposition 57, The Public Safety and Rehabilitation Act of 2016, approved by voters in November 2016.

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