



Office of the District Attorney Stanislaus County

Jeff Laugero
District Attorney

Assistant District Attorney
Mark Zahner

Chief Deputies
Marlisa Ferreira
Wendell Emerson
Michael D. Houston
Rick Mury
Joseph Chavez

Bureau of Investigation
Chief Terry L. Seese

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: March 4, 2024
Re: Mark Edward Coke
“Three Strikes” Inmate Denied Parole

For More Information Contact:

Wendell Emerson, Public Information Liaison
Phone: (209) 525-5509

Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Jeff Laugero announced today that Mark Edward Coke, age 61, of Ceres was found unsuitable for parole during a January 23, 2024 hearing of the State Board of Parole Hearings at California Medical Facility in Vacaville. Deputy District Attorney Holly MacKinnon appeared at the hearing on behalf of the People.

In November of 1998, Coke entered the hardware department of Wal-Mart in Ceres, removed the sensors off two micro torches, placed them inside his waistband and left the store without paying. He was arrested and placed into custody. Coke then escaped the honor farm while his case was pending and was apprehended weeks later. Coke’s criminal history included prior convictions for possession of controlled substances, burglary and attempted murder, numerous parole violations and he had served two prior prison terms.

On February 25, 1999, Coke was convicted by a court trial of petty theft with priors. His prior serious and violent felony convictions under California’s “Three Strikes” law were used to increase his sentence to 25 years to life in state prison.

Since his admission to prison, Coke has committed numerous rules violations including possession of alcohol, refusing to provide urine sample, possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of controlled substances (morphine and heroin), possession of cell phones and chargers, battery on an inmate, and disobeying orders.

A prison psychologist who examined Coke in 2021 gave the opinion that Coke still posed a moderate risk for violence if he were to be released into the community. The psychologist felt Coke’s ongoing procurement of contraband (methamphetamines, heroin, alcohol) while in prison in recent years suggests that he has maintained associations with antisocially minded peers. At his previous parole hearing, the Board recommended Coke improve his parole plans, participate in more substance abuse and gang awareness programming, and work on obtaining marketable skills.

Prosecutor MacKinnon asked the Board to deny parole, pointing out that Coke had not participated in or internalized in programming as recommended by the previous Board and that coupled with his lack of sustained sobriety and substance abuse treatment and participation make him an unreasonable risk of danger to the community if he were to be released from prison.

After deliberations, the Board denied parole for three years, stating that, although Coke had shown progress in some areas, he had not exhibited adequate offender change since the last hearing. They noted he had not sufficiently followed the recommendations of the previous Board and needed to participate in more targeted mental health, victim awareness and substance abuse programming. The Board concluded by denying parole for a period of three years.

This was Coke's second parole hearing. He was previously denied parole in 2022 for a period of three years. Due to his age, he is eligible for elder parole consideration and may petition the Board for another hearing earlier than in three years should his circumstances support it.

###