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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: August 8, 2006
Re: Michael Wells

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Michael Wells, 43, of Modesto, was sentenced to state prison after being convicted of felony evading the police with willful and wanton disregard for safety. Deputy District Attorney John R. Mayne prosecuted the case.

On November 21, 2006 in the late evening hours, a California Highway Patrol Officer tried to stop Wells's vehicle on Carpenter Road. Wells, a state prison parolee, tried to get away by driving recklessly through Modesto city streets at speeds of up to 60 miles per hour, ignoring stop signs, a red traffic light, and going the wrong way on H street. Wells continued running from the police on Highway 99 at speeds of up to 110 miles per hour. The pursuit continued into San Joaquin County on Jack Tone and Farmington Roads until Wells's car stopped. Wells ran from the car and had to be forcibly subdued by the officers.

At trial, Wells testified that he stopped only because he ran out of gas and admitted speeding and running stop signs. A Stanislaus County Superior Court jury convicted him April 5th, 2006 of felony evading the police. The jury also found true six prior convictions of residential burglary, making Wells eligible for punishment under the "Three Strikes" law. In addition to those crimes, Wells also had prior convictions of theft and assault with force likely to cause great bodily injury.

At sentencing on August 2nd, 2006, Wells's defense attorney argued to the court that he should not be sentenced to life in prison under the Three Strikes law because his repeated criminality was simply the result of a cocaine addiction. Prosecutor Mayne argued that during Wells's life he had been continually involved in criminal acts and was on parole from state prison at the time of this offense. Wells has another felony case pending in which he is charged with assaulting a police officer.

The Judge agreed with the prosecution that Wells's consistent criminal history of committing felony crimes did not warrant escaping the consequences of Three Strikes and sentenced him to life in state prison.

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