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**PRESS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release**

Date: June 6, 2011  
Re: False Documents, ID Theft and  
Weapons charges lead to prison

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Jose Curiel Chavez and Rosario Velarde of Ceres were convicted in Department 7, before the Honorable Judge Scott Steffen, of charges prosecuted by the District Attorney's Office Real Estate Fraud Unit. Mr. Chavez pled no contest to one count of False Documents Concealing Citizenship and two counts of Possession of Assault Weapons. Ms. Velarde pled no contest to felony violations of False Documents Concealing Citizenship and Misuse of Personal Identifying Information.

Mr. Chavez and Ms. Velarde used social security card numbers and credit history of other persons to obtain real estate and auto loans and to conceal their status as illegal aliens. Their crimes came to light when the main victim, an Arizona resident, applied for a credit card and discovered that her social security number was being used by another person who had obtained multiple loans using the victim's social security number and credit history. A search warrant on the Chavez and Velarde home was obtained by officers of the Ceres Police Department in February of this year. The officers found evidence of the above crimes and also found 28 guns, two of which were illegal semi-automatic rifles.

Chavez was sentenced to five years in state prison and ordered to pay restitution to the victim of the identity theft. Velarde was given a suspended prison sentence of five years, placed on probation for three years with terms including eight months in the county jail, restitution, search terms, and ordered not to return unlawfully to the United States if she is deported. Neither is a legal US citizen, each has a federal immigration hold, and each is subject to deportation once their state cases are concluded.

The Real Estate Fraud Unit received a great deal of help from several agencies including the Ceres Police Department, the Department of Homeland Security, and the US Social Security, Office of Investigations and appreciates their invaluable assistance in this prosecution. The Real Estate Fraud Unit urges everyone to be reminded, by the facts of this case, of the urgent need to safeguard their personal financial information.