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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: October 5, 2015
Re: People vs James Fonda

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that James Fonda, age 70, of Oakdale, was convicted of grand theft on September 17, 2015. Deputy District Attorney Jeff Mangar prosecuted the case.

In September 2009, then-attorney James Fonda received over \$486,000 on behalf of his disabled client. The money was the remaining equity of a foreclosed home that was auctioned at a trustee sale. The victim had inherited the home. Since the victim was also going through a divorce, Fonda agreed to keep the money in his client trust fund account to conceal the inheritance from being included in any divorce settlement. Between September 2009 and February 2012, Fonda withdrew over \$180,000 via 163 separate checks written to himself for personal reasons without his client's permission. Fonda used the money to purchase a Jaguar, pay for a European vacation and gamble at casinos.

"The victim sought out an attorney to help him," stated prosecutor Mangar, "and Fonda took advantage of his position of trust to then swindle the money."

This case is the product of an investigation by the Stanislaus County District Attorney's Office Real Estate Fraud Unit in cooperation with the California State Bar.

Although Fonda has no criminal history and had acknowledged wrongdoing to investigators before his arrest, Judge Linda McFadden sentenced him to the maximum term of three years in prison, but suspended while on five years of formal felony probation. During his time on probation, Fonda is ordered to serve one year in jail and to make full restitution. Fonda was disbarred and can no longer practice law.

"This was more than a one-time lapse of judgment," stated prosecutor Mangar, "which violated the public trust and cost Fonda his law practice."

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