



Office of the District Attorney Stanislaus County

Birgit Fladager
District Attorney

Assistant District Attorney
Jeffrey M. Laugero

Chief Deputies
Marlisa Ferreira
Wendell Emerson
Michael D. Houston
Mark Zahner

Bureau of Investigation
Chief Terry L. Seese

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: March 22, 2022
Re: Isabello Joe Rivera
Three Strikes Life Inmate Granted Parole

For More Information Contact:

John Goold, Public Information Liaison
Phone: (209) 525-6909

Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Isabello Joe Rivera, age 66, of Patterson, California was found suitable for parole during a March 1, 2022, hearing of the State Board of Parole Hearings held at Valley State Prison in Chowchilla. Special Prosecutor Holly MacKinnon appeared at the hearing on behalf of the People.

On October 18, 1999, at approximately 9 p.m., Rivera's spouse approached a Stanislaus County Sheriff's Department deputy. She was crying and told deputies that Rivera pushed her around and she wanted him out of her home. Rivera also had a \$250,000 warrant out for his arrest.

Deputies entered the residence and saw Rivera standing in the living room and they ordered him to lie on the ground. Instead, Rivera reached for a handgun located in the back waist of his pants. Deputies grabbed Rivera and attempted to prevent him from reaching his weapon. Rivera fought with the deputies, breaking free and continued to attempt to grab the handgun. Four deputies struggled with Rivera until they were able to handcuff him and seize the weapon. The weapon was a Colt .45 with a round in the chamber and 6 rounds in the magazine.

On April 9, 2002, Rivera pled guilty to possession of a firearm by a felon and admitted having prior felony convictions for second degree murder (1977) and robbery (1991). Both counted as "strikes" under California's "Three Strikes" law. He was sentenced on March 22, 2002 to serve 25 years to life in state prison.

During the parole hearing, Prosecutor MacKinnon argued against Rivera's release on parole and for continued confinement based on the inmate's commitment offense which put his spouse and law enforcement in grave danger, his lengthy criminal history which includes six prior prison commitments, and his lack of sufficient substance abuse and domestic violence programming.

Office: 832 12th Street, Suite 300 Modesto, CA 95354 Mailing: PO BOX 442 Modesto, CA 95353
Telephone: (209) 525-5550 Fax: (209) 558-4027 www.stanislaus-da.org



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At the conclusion of the hearing, the Board of Parole Hearings granted parole, finding that Rivera did not pose an unreasonable risk to public safety. The Board noted Rivera had received only one rule violation since 2007 and had actively participated in programming in the past 6 months including substance abuse, AA/NA, vocational and self-help programs. The Board gave great weight to the fact that Rivera had expressed sufficient remorse and insight into the causes of his criminal behavior. In addition, the Board felt he had a release plan which included transitional housing, family support and employment which mitigated any safety risk he may pose to the community.

Although sentenced to serve 25 years to life in prison under California's "Three Strikes" law, recent changes to the law made Rivera eligible for early release after serving 20 years despite his prior violent criminal history of murder and robbery. 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. This was his first and only parole hearing since being sent to prison in 2002.

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