



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: September 28, 2022
Re: Mark Edward Coke
“Three Strikes” Inmate Denied 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 Mark Edward Coke, age 60, of Ceres was found unsuitable for parole during an August 9, 2022 hearing of the State Board of Parole Hearings at the California Medical Facility in Vacaville. Special Prosecutor Holly MacKinnon appeared at the hearing on behalf of the People.

In November of 1998, Coke entered the hardware department of the Ceres Wal-Mart, removed the anti-theft sensors from two micro torches, hid them inside his waistband and left the store without paying. After being arrested, he was housed at the Sheriff's Honor Farm while awaiting trial but escaped and was apprehended weeks later.

Coke's extensive criminal history included prior juvenile adjudications for vehicle code and theft offenses for which he was sentenced to the California Youth Authority. As an adult he was convicted of possession of controlled substances and other drug offenses. In 1982, he was convicted of residential first-degree burglary and in 1985, after being released from prison, he was convicted of attempted murder. Both crimes counted as “strikes” under California's “Three Strikes” law making him eligible for a sentence of 25 years to life in state prison.

On February 25, 1999, in a court trial before the late Judge John G. Whiteside, Coke was convicted of felony petty theft. He was also found to have been previously convicted of the two prior serious or violent felony offenses.

On April 29, 1999, Judge Whiteside denied a defense motion to dismiss the prior strike convictions and sentenced Coke to serve 25 years to life in state prison plus an additional term for escaping from the county jail without force.

Since going to prison in 1999, Coke has violated numerous prison rules including possessing alcohol, drug paraphernalia, controlled substances (morphine and heroin), cellphones and batteries. He also refused to provide urine sample, committed battery on an inmate, and disobeyed orders. In 2015, he was convicted in Solano County Superior Court of possessing drugs or drug contraband in state prison and sentenced to an additional consecutive term which was added to his life sentence.

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



<https://www.facebook.com/StanislausDistrictAttorney/>

A prison psychologist who examined Coke prior to the parole hearing gave the opinion that he currently posed a moderate risk for violence if he were to be released into the community. Coke's documented ongoing problem with substance-related, rule-violating behaviors supported a finding of addiction and anti-social behavioral compulsions which also suggested he has maintained connections with antisocially minded peers while in prison custody. Finally, the psychologist found that Coke had insufficient parole plans which did not include participation in substance abuse and mental health treatment if released.

Prosecutor MacKinnon asked the Board to deny parole, pointing out that Coke's inadequate parole plans coupled with his lack of sustained sobriety and substance abuse treatment and participation made him an unreasonable risk of danger to the community if he were to be released from prison.

After deliberations, the Board denied release for three years stating that, although Coke had shown progress in some areas, his extensive criminal history and lack of internalization of the limited amount of programming he had done weighed against his suitability for parole. The Board found that Coke needed to improve his parole plans, including developing a cohesive relapse plan before returning to the community. Coke also needed to participate in more targeted mental health and substance abuse treatment.

This was Coke's first parole hearing. He previously waived his right to a hearing in 2021. 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 circumstances support it.

#