



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
COUNTY OF TULARE

Tim Ward, *District Attorney*

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**PRESS RELEASE**

8/16/19

**MAN DENIED PAROLE FOR 1998 MURDER OF HIS MOTHER**

On August 14, 2019, at Folsom State Prison, a California parole board issued a 5-year denial for James Ray Kelley, age 49, for the 1998 murder of his mother near Waukena.

On May 1, 1998, Kelley, age 28 at the time, went with his 66-year-old mother to a local store to cash her \$597 Social Security check. When they returned to their shared residence, Kelley lured her to a bedroom and strangled her to death with his hands. In an effort to conceal her body, Kelley placed her in large garbage bags, sealed the bags shut with duct tape and hid her under the bed.

Kelley then walked to a convenience store and called 911, telling the dispatcher what he had done and that his mother's body would be found at the residence. After locating the victim, Tulare County Sheriff's deputies responded to the store where they made contact with Kelley and took him into custody. Further investigation revealed that Kelley had thought about committing the crime a number of different ways for months. He also admitted that he had planned to take the Social Security check money and travel to Las Vegas. Deputies located an Amtrak schedule and maps of the city among Kelley's personal items.

Kelley pleaded guilty to first-degree murder on April 9, 2003, and was sentenced to 25 years-to-life in prison. This was his first parole hearing.

The District Attorney's Office routinely attends parole hearings and a supervising prosecutor argued against the inmate's release in this case.

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