



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
COUNTY OF TULARE

Tim Ward, *District Attorney*

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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**CALIFORNIA RELEASES FELONS EARLY**

Governor Gavin Newsom and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), in light of ongoing precautions surrounding the COVID19 pandemic and California's historical shift toward prioritizing convicted criminals over their victims, have begun the process of releasing thousands of inmates, many with violent records, back into California communities. Only limited criteria exist for prosecutors to object to such releases. Tulare County prosecutors will object where the rules allow.

As of this moment, 53 inmates convicted in Tulare County are identified for early release from California prisons. Crimes committed by these inmates consist of various felonies and all identified for release have extensive criminal histories, many having prior convictions for serious or violent crimes otherwise known as "strike" offenses. The criminal histories of these inmates include convictions for crimes such as lewd act on a child, voluntary manslaughter, robbery, child abuse, auto theft, and evading police.

Many inmates possess numerous parole violations, showing an inability to remain free from custody.

One particular egregious release includes Terra Bella man Steven Elms, 45, who possesses 11 DUI convictions and was [sentenced to over 5 years in prison for DUI in February 2019](#).

"Do not be fooled by the rhetoric that these individuals are non-violent. To release an inmate with 11 DUI convictions back into our community, already reeling from recent tragedies related to drunk drivers, is not only reckless but also completely insensitive to victims. In 2020, this office has already filed six DUI murder cases. This equals the combined total of such filings from 2018 and 2019," said District Attorney Tim Ward.

“Governor Newsom is quick to get in front of cameras to tell Californians to shutter their businesses, schools and places of worship, but refuses to look us in the eye to tell us why it is safe to release convicted felons back into our cities early,” continued Ward.

“For years, I’ve talked about truth in sentencing and what it means to victims of crime. As prosecutors, the most common question a victim will ask us is, “when will this person get out of prison?” It would appear the state is answering that question for us - early. No matter what that judge says in the courtroom, the person who murdered, raped, assaulted, stole, vandalized, threatened, stalked, or abused you or a family member or friend, is getting out early due to Proposition 47, Proposition 57, elder parole, or some other reduced time scheme. CDCR can hide behind the word “expedited,” but make no mistake, these inmates are being released early. This new wave of releases is just another get out of jail free card courtesy of the State of California. However, prosecutors in this office will continue to seek maximum penalties; and, when we have the ability, will continue to object to early release at the local and state levels.”

Tulare County residents can contact the Governor’s Office at <https://govapps.gov.ca.gov/gov40mail/>.

CDCR expedited release criteria can be found at <https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/covid19/expedited-releases/>.

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