



County of San Bernardino
Office of the District Attorney
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Orange County Superior Court Rejects Placement of Sexually Violent Predator in San Bernardino County

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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SAN BERNARDINO Calif. –A determination has been made by Orange County Superior Court in the matter of the Sexually Violent Predator (SVP) Lawtis Rhoden (72) and Liberty Healthcare’s second attempt at placing him in San Bernardino County, without him having committed any of his crimes within the county, and without any nexus to San Bernardino County.

SVP Rhoden has been convicted of sexual assaults on four minor victims occurring in 1984: His offenses included Rape by Kidnapping, Forcible Rape, Robbery, Sexual Battery and Use of a Minor for Obscene Purposes. His victims were two 14-year-old females, a 13-year-old female and 17-year-old female in Los Angeles County, Orange County and Davidson County, Tennessee.

In 2006, after Rhoden served his criminal sentence, and prior to his release from custody in California, the Orange County District Attorney’s Office filed a petition seeking to have Rhoden declared a sexually violent predator pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code Section 6600. In July 2013, a jury found that Rhoden "is a sexually violent predator and ordered him committed for an indeterminate term to the custody of the Department of State Hospitals for appropriate treatment and confinement in a secure facility".

Since 2006 Rhoden has been participating in a Sex Offender Treatment Program and petitioned to be conditionally released, with a court order supervised release through The Conditional Release Program ("CONREP"). CONREP is administered by the Department of State Hospital’s designee, Liberty Healthcare.

In October 2019, Rhoden was ordered to be conditionally released by the Orange County Superior Court.

In February of 2021, Orange County Superior Court found "extraordinary circumstances" based upon the representation of Liberty Healthcare that they were unable to find suitable housing for Rhoden in Orange County. Liberty Healthcare then turned its sights on San Bernardino County.

This began nine months of litigation, multiple hearings and testimony from San Bernardino County District Attorney’s office, San Bernardino County Sheriff, the communities of Twentynine Palms and Newberry Springs.

On November 22, 2021, after considering information from the public comment hearings, pursuant to Welfare and Institution Code 6609.1 (a)(5), and the various statutes relating to SVP conditional release, Orange County

Superior Court rejected Liberty Healthcare's attempt to place Rhoden in Newberry Springs. Furthermore, the Court approved a proposed placement for SVP Rhoden in Los Angeles County.

Our Office would like to thank the San Bernardino County Sheriffs Department for their tremendous efforts and resources in investigating the proposed properties and talking to the surrounding community members of each proposed property.

We also like thank Congressman Jay Obernolte, Senator Shannon Grove, Assembly Member Thurston "Smitty" Smith, San Bernardino County Supervisors Dawn Rowe and Ret. Colonel Paul Cook, Barstow Mayor Dr. Anthony Courtney, and 29 Palms Mayor Daniel Mintz, Sr. for attending community meetings and public hearings on behalf of their constituents.

Lastly, we owe a debt of gratitude to the communities of Twentynine Palms and Newberry Springs; you were the most important partner to us, in providing information and evidence about the nuances within your communities, showing up to townhall meetings, and appearing in person and on Webex to the public comments hearing.

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