

NEWS

From the County of San Bernardino
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 13, 2005

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Supervisors, District Attorney target identity theft crimes

VICTORVILLE – San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors Chairman Bill Postmus today joined District Attorney Michael Ramos in announcing the formation of an Identity Theft Prosecution Unit. The creation of the unit, approved moments earlier by a unanimous vote of the Board of Supervisors, is being implemented as a measure to deal with increasing numbers of identity theft crimes.

The Inland Empire ranks second in the nation in instances of identity theft, according to federal statistics released earlier this year. In 2004, there were about 5,400 identity theft cases reported in the Inland Empire, which was an increase of almost 25 percent over the previous year.

"We need to assign highly skilled investigators to track, locate and lock up these suspects," said Supervisor Postmus. "We need to stop these criminals in order to protect our citizens from being victimized."

The plan approved by the Board of Supervisors will fund a comprehensive attack on this invasive and destructive wave of crime. Approval of the new unit will authorize the District Attorney to hire three Deputy District Attorney IVs and a District Attorney Senior Investigator who will specialize in prosecuting these cases. A deputy district attorney will be assigned to each of the three major regions in the county – San Bernardino, Rancho Cucamonga and Victorville. The estimated cost of the program for the remaining six months of this fiscal year is \$360,384, including start-up costs. The estimated full-year funding for next fiscal year is expected to be \$610,998.

"The San Bernardino County District Attorney's Office plans to attack this problem aggressively by assigning staff to vigorously investigate and prosecute these criminals," said Ramos. "We appreciate the Board of Supervisors' support in this effort."