



Office of the

## DISTRICT ATTORNEY

*Michael A. Ramos, San Bernardino County District Attorney*

### NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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### **3 PARENTS ARRESTED FOR FAILURE TO ADDRESS TRUANCY**

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. – Parents who have allowed their children to miss too many days in the classroom received a visit from law enforcement officers last week.

The crackdown last Thursday targeted three parents who have already been issued numerous warnings and invitations from local law enforcement and school officials to correct the problem.

In collaboration with the San Bernardino County District Attorney's Office Let's End Truancy Project (LET), officers from the Fontana Unified School Police arrested Jeannie Ramirez, 44, of Bloomington, Louie Perez, Jr., 40, and April Baynes, 33, both of Fontana, for Failure to Address Truancy and Failure to Appear in court.

"Sometimes we have to reinforce the idea that it is a crime to not send your child to school," said Chief Deputy District Attorney Karen Bell, who oversees LET. "We don't want to take that route, but some parents force our hand and give us no other choice but to file criminal charges."

The LET Project, which is funded through Assembly Bill 1913, allocates state resources annually to fund programs that address juvenile crime prevention and focus on public safety.

District Attorney Michael A. Ramos, who also served seven years on the Redlands' School Board, knows how important a good education is to a child's future. Ramos pointed out that truancy is often the gateway to juvenile delinquency and a lifetime of crime and poverty.

"Studies have shown that truant students are at greater risk for becoming involved in gangs, drugs, alcohol or violence," said Ramos. "So if we really want to make a change in the lives of our children, it means tackling the problem head on, and that is exactly what the LET Project is

doing. By digging to the root cause of the truancy, we can connect both parent and student with the resources they need to get their lives back on track.”

The consequences for parents who are arrested for their child’s truancy include up to one year in county jail and/or a \$2,000 fine for each child who is not in compliance.

“We need to reach truant students *before* they become involved in the criminal justice system as victims or perpetrators,” said Ramos. “And if that means sending a strong message to parents to step up and start taking responsibility for their kids, then so be it.”

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