



# BUTTE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY



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## PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
September 1, 2023

### **BUTTE COUNTY JUDGE REDUCES PRISON SENTENCE FOR VIOLENT FELON**

A Chico man who was convicted at jury trial in 2019 of a vicious, unprovoked attack on a 57-year-old Chico State professor had his sentence significantly reduced yesterday by a Butte County Superior Court judge.

**Ryan Edgar Wayne Muscat, 39, of Chico**, had been convicted by a jury in 2019 of a violent assault on a Chico State mathematics professor which left the professor with life-long injuries and disability. Muscat also had a prior “strike” conviction for a prior robbery conviction. Muscat also had pleaded guilty to two additional felonies at the time of his assault conviction relating to his throwing urine at correctional staff in the Butte County Jail.

Muscat had been sentenced in 2020 to the middle term of 18 years in state prison for his crimes by Butte County Superior Court Judge Michael Deems.

The case was back before Judge Deems yesterday for a legislatively mandated resentencing hearing where the judge reduced Muscat’s sentence by five years, from 18 years to 13 years in state prison over the prosecution’s objection. With credit for the time he has already served, Muscat could be out in as little as four more years.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said recent legislative changes in the law which are designed to lessen the punishment for violent offenders allowed Muscat to appeal to have his sentence changed by the original sentencing judge. Ramsey said that, despite the recent changes in the law, Judge Deems still had the legal authority to re-impose the original 18-year sentence if he found it to be in the interest of justice.

Ramsey said his office had filed a written opposition to any reduction for Muscat, citing the rights of the victim and the public’s interest in keeping a dangerous felon off the streets for as long as possible. In this case, Muscat had alleged under the new sentencing laws that his bad childhood should mandate a lower term. Ramsey said his prosecutors however pointed out to Judge Deems that recent appellate cases would allow the judge to decline to reduce Muscat’s sentence if the judge felt it was not in the interest of justice to do so.

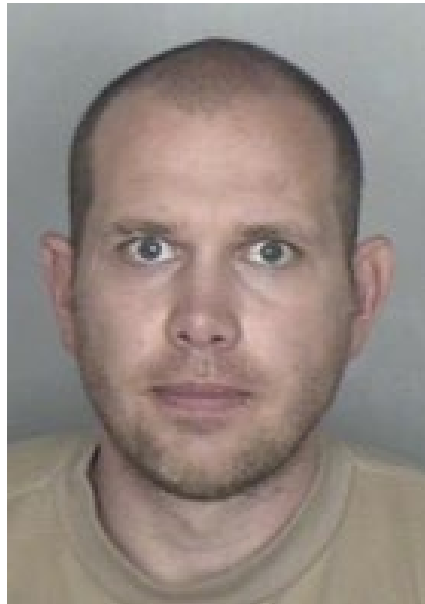
At yesterday’s hearing, prosecutors argued vehemently against reducing Muscat’s sentence and noted that releasing Muscat early presented a grave risk to public safety as the circumstances of

the offense were particularly egregious given Muscat's mental issues and use of methamphetamine.

Ramsey said Judge Deems reduced Muscat's sentence by 5 years, or over 27 percent, leaving him with a new total sentence of 13 years. Ramsey said the judge did decline to reduce the sentence further, ironically citing concerns about public safety if Muscat were to be released early.

Ramsey said the crime occurred when Muscat was renting a room from a Chico State professor who had offered to help out a mutual friend by providing Muscat a place to live. However, the professor had threatened eviction proceedings on Muscat for his alcohol and drug use when Muscat burst into the professor's room and attacked him during the early morning hours of October 29, 2017. The professor suffered serious injuries which left him permanently disabled.

Ramsey said at trial Muscat took the stand in his own defense and tried to claim that the professor had attacked him first. The jury easily saw through Muscat's self-serving falsehoods and convicted him. Ramsey said his office pointed out to Judge Deems that Muscat continues to deny responsibility for his actions, blaming his bad childhood and also continuing to claim that the victim, a middle-aged professor with no criminal history, attacked him first.



**Ryan Muscat**