



# BUTTE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY



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## PRESS RELEASE

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### Repeat Drunk Driver Sentenced

A 63-year-old Chico woman who committed four driving under the influence offenses this past fall in less than four months was sentenced today to five years of formal probation supervision and alcohol monitoring after serving two months in jail.

**Gail Ann Hemmingsen, 63, of Chico**, had previously pleaded no contest to four separate DUI offenses and a misdemeanor offense of attempted criminal threats. The multiple DUI offenses and criminal threats stem from a string of drunken incidents Hemmingsen accumulated between September and November of 2022.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said the events began on the evening of September 11, 2022. Hemmingsen was driving under the influence, with a blood alcohol content of over 0.20%, when she ran into the back of another citizen's vehicle, which was stopped at a red light in Chico. The driver that Hemmingsen rear-ended luckily suffered only moderate injuries from the collision. Hemmingsen was taken to Butte County Jail but bailed out later that night on a felony bond of \$75,000.

Just a month later, on October 13, 2022, at approximately 2:00 a.m., Hemmingsen drove to the Chico Police Department parking lot and was honking her horn to get the attention of officers inside, exclaiming she needed help finding a family member. Officers noted Hemmingsen appeared and smelled intoxicated, and after a DUI investigation, she was arrested for driving to the police station under the influence. Her blood alcohol content was tested at a level of 0.14% an hour and a half later. She was released from jail on a citation for this misdemeanor DUI.

On October 25, 2022, after demanding and being denied speedy service at a downtown Chico bar, Hemmingsen left the bar and then returned with a mallet threatening to kill the offending bartender. She was arrested, charged, and held in custody after a judge refused to grant Hemmingsen an own-recognition release. She did however bail out of the jail on November 8, 2020, on a separate \$50,000 bond to appear back in court on November 23, 2022, with the condition that she neither possess nor consume alcohol.

The following month, on November 16, 2022, at approximately 10:00 p.m., Chico Police Officers were dispatched to a vandalism report at a westside bar in Chico. Once there, officers found Hemmingsen had let the air out of the tires of one of the patrons there and was driving her

vehicle in the parking lot, yet again under the influence with a blood alcohol level of 0.08%. She was arrested, booked into jail, but released again on a citation for this misdemeanor DUI.

Just two weeks later, on November 23, 2022, Hemmingsen was out of custody and in court at the Butte County Courthouse in Oroville, appearing on the DUI and threat cases that had been filed against her. Based on her repeated DUIs and threat to the community, she was remanded into custody and booked at the Butte County Jail. Hemmingsen posted a bail bond of \$75,000 just hours after the court ordered her into custody. At approximately 8:00 p.m. that same evening, she was once again driving under the influence after being ejected from another Chico bar.

When officers responded to that bar, Hemmingsen had already left the parking lot in her vehicle, but employees provided her direction of travel and officers were able to locate her. When officers attempted to stop Hemmingsen, she continued driving until officers had to set out spike strips to safely stop her. Her blood alcohol level on this occasion was 0.00% but she was heavily under the influence of marijuana. Chico police contacted an on-call judge that night, who ordered her bail to be set at \$500,000 in order for her to be seen by a judge in court.

Ramsey said Hemmingsen remained in jail until she was next in court on November 29, 2022, where his office filed a motion for her to be held without bail, which was granted. Hemmingsen remained in custody until her sentencing today.

Ramsey said his office asked for a prison commitment for Hemmingsen given her danger to the public. However, the judge today decided to try her on formal probation citing her lack of a previous criminal record; her prior career as a local school speech therapist; a diagnosed mental health issue for which she stopped her medication prior to her recent spree; and her stated remorse for her actions.

She was given credit for the two months that she has already served in Butte County Jail. She was ordered to pay restitution of over \$6,000 to the victim of her crash and court fines of over \$8400. The judge also ordered her to wear a GPS ankle monitor that would continuously monitor her location and any alcohol consumption as she was prohibited from entering any bars or having any alcohol or marijuana. Her driver's license was suspended and she was also ordered to stay away from the bartender that she threatened.

Ramsey noted Hemmingsen was warned that if she should drive under the influence and cause the death of another, she would face not just a driving offense, but murder charges.



Gail Ann Hemmingsen