



BUTTE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY



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PRESS RELEASE

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Chico Lawyer is Arrested for Harboring Fugitive

A Chico attorney was arrested today by investigators from the Butte County District Attorney's Office for harboring her fugitive boyfriend, who was also a client.

Stephana Femino, 47, of Chico, was taken into custody outside the Butte County Superior Court this morning after a warrant for her arrest was issued by a Butte County judge last night.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said his office began investigating Femino in June after it was discovered she was allegedly assisting her boyfriend, Adam Ashford, 49, who was also her client, in remaining a fugitive on several felony arrest warrants.

Ramsey said Ashford is a convicted felon and was on probation in several serious cases, including possession of drugs while armed with a firearm, assault with a deadly weapon, and felony evading the police. Ramsey said Ashford had violated the terms of his probation earlier this year and failed to appear in court on May 11, 2022. At that time, a Butte County judge issued "no bail" warrants for his arrest for the probation violations. Ramsey said Femino represented Ashford on those cases and was in court when Ashford failed to show up and the warrants were issued. In the weeks that followed, law enforcement became aware of evidence that showed Femino was assisting Ashford in remaining free and avoiding the warrants.

Ramsey said that in late June his office began a formal investigation into Femino and Ashford, and learned that Femino was allowing Ashford to stay in her law office in Chico. It also became apparent that Femino and Ashford were engaged in a romantic relationship. Law enforcement personnel from multiple agencies participated in the investigation, and on June 24, 2022, located and arrested Ashford, who was with Femino in a car near Butte College. Ashford was taken into custody and is currently held without bail in Butte County Jail.

Ramsey said after Ashford's arrest, investigators seized his cell phone and obtained a specialized search warrant designed to protect the privacy of Femino's other clients, as there was a claim that Ashford had worked as an office manager for Femino for a time. A download of Ashford's cell phone yielded hundreds of texts between Femino and Ashford while Ashford was out to warrant. Ramsey said those texts confirmed Femino was providing Ashford with money and shelter to assist him in remaining a fugitive.

Ramsey said that after his investigative team concluded that portion of their investigation, they determined there was sufficient evidence to arrest and charge Femino for harboring a fugitive, which is a felony in California. Investigators then obtained an arrest warrant for Femino, which resulted in her being taken into custody today and being taken to Butte County Jail.

Ramsey said the information surrounding Femino's arrest has been shared with the California State Bar. Ramsey said in recent months local judges have sanctioned Femino over \$10,000 in fines for deficiencies in her practice of law in the local courts.