



# BUTTE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY



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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Jury Convicts Felon for 2018 “Pretend” Bank Robbery and Criminal Threats**

A 47-year-old Oroville man was convicted of two counts of robbery and four counts of criminal threats by a Butte County Superior Court jury this morning for a 2018 Oroville bank robbery which occurred just days prior to the devastating Camp Fire. The jury unanimously found **Joshua Daniel Newens** guilty despite a defense “mental” claim that the robbery was only a “pretend” robbery. Newens’ jury trial had been delayed many months as his attorney tried to get his case diverted to a mental health court.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said the evidence presented to the jury included November 5, 2018 surveillance footage from the Oroville Bank of the West showing Newens entering the bank and ordering everybody to the ground. Newens claimed to have a bomb and threatened to kill everyone in the bank unless they followed his demands. Newens could be seen on the surveillance tape going down the teller line, gesturing violently as he took money from the tellers. Ramsey said the victims testified Newens put them in fear for their lives and they were scared of what would happen if they did not comply with his demands.

After taking the money, Newens launched into a short profanity-laden rant, yelling at the victims to remember his name and remember his face. Thankfully, Ramsey said, the Oroville Police Department responded quickly, arriving less than three minutes after the initial 911 call and immediately detaining Newens at gunpoint before he could escape.

At the trial, Newens defense counsel presented evidence that approximately an hour before the robbery; Newens was contacted at another Oroville bank creating a disturbance in the parking lot. He made statements to a responding officer that he was going to “pretend” to do a bank robbery. It was determined he was unarmed and he was sent on this way.

However, Ramsey said his trial prosecutor DJ Lee showed that after the Bank of the West robbery, Newens told arresting officers that he “came to “rob this mother f-ing bank and to show this mother f-ing place what’s up.” And, even though no bomb was ever located, Newens was found in possession of a water bottle that he later admitted to using as if it were a bomb. Witnesses from inside the bank also testified Newens seemed like he “meant business” and Newens absolutely knew where he was and what he was doing when he took several thousand dollars from them.

Newens made additional statements to officers on the way to the Butte County Jail, saying that

he had needed some quick money to get out of town so he decided to rob the Bank of the West. However Ramsey said this statement was excluded from evidence by the judge on a claimed Miranda violation. Despite this ruling, Ramsey said his prosecutor DJ Lee persevered and convinced the jury of the true nature of Newens' intent to rob.

Ramsey said the trial judge is scheduled to determine next week whether Newens' two prior "strike" convictions are valid and true. Newens has previously been convicted in Butte County of First Degree Residential Burglary and Discharging A Firearm With Gross Negligence, as well as other felony convictions. Due to these prior "strike" convictions, Newens would be designated a "Third Striker" if the judge finds them to be true and faces a possible 25-to-life prison sentence.

