



# BUTTE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY



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## PRESS RELEASE

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### CONVICTED CHILD MOLESTER FACES LIFE SENTENCE

A Chico man was convicted by jury today in Butte County Superior Court of multiple counts of forcible child molest against a young girl in his custody when she was between the ages of 12 to 17.

Jurors sat through two weeks of evidence and deliberated for two hours Thursday afternoon before finding **William David Lawson, Jr.**, 45, guilty on all 15 counts and seven special allegations of which he was charged. The trial judge later found true a special allegation that Lawson had previously suffered a previous “strike” conviction for a residential burglary he committed in 2000, which serves to double his potential sentence in this case.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey praised the jurors and alternate jurors for doing their civic duty in listening to two weeks of emotional and often difficult evidence related to the ongoing sexual abuse of the young girl.

The trial prosecutor Leah Sears said the now 20-year-old victim was “resilient and courageous, taking the stand to testify against her abuser on three separate days during the two-week trial.” Sears also noted that cell phone data forensically downloaded from Lawson’s phone corroborated the girl’s testimony about the areas in Chico where she was molested. Sears applauded the Chico Police Department and the work of Detective Sophia Parsons, noting that “the extensive and meticulous investigation conducted in this case allowed the jury to deliver justice for the victim today.”

Lawson remains in custody with no bail. He will appear on June 16, 2021 for sentencing. He faces a maximum exposure of 150 years to life in prison, plus an additional 214 years.

Ramsey however noted that legislation passed last year by the state legislature would qualify Lawson to seek parole after only twenty years of custody. “The state’s new ‘Elder Parole program’ allows prisoners sentenced to life, regardless of the statutory minimum of that life sentence, to seek parole after only twenty years of custody once they reach 50 years of age.” Ramsey said.

