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PRESS RELEASE

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Woman Falsely Claims to be Camp Fire Victim to Avoid Criminal Sentence

A Chico woman was in Butte County Superior Court today tearfully attempting to claim she was the victim of the November 2018 Camp Fire as a reason for her turning to theft to survive. However when it was pointed out that she committed her alleged Grand Theft approximately a year before the Camp Fire, the woman turned angry, cursing those in the court and “flipping off” the prosecutor.

Traci Renae Wright, 45, was convicted of Grand Theft in May 2018 for a December 2017 theft of clothing, boots, jewelry, luggage, checkbooks and prescription medicine from a former roommate’s residence. A judge on May 10, 2018 placed Wright on mandatory probation supervision. She was found to be in violation of that probation grant almost immediately afterwards when she failed to report to jail to serve the time imposed by the judge for the theft. Wright also later failed to report to her probation officer and a warrant was issued. Wright was sentenced to additional jail time in response to these violations.

In addition, Wright was found to have committed new law violations outside of Butte County on two separate occasions during her mandatory probation supervision grant, as well as having provided a phony address to probation officers. Attempts were repeatedly made by probation officers to both locate and communicate with Wright between May 2018 and November 2019, which were unsuccessful.

At the sentencing hearing today for Wright’s violations of her mandatory probation supervision, Wright claimed the Camp Fire was the catastrophic event which lead her into the circumstances she was now facing before the Court. Wright claimed her home had burned immediately prior to the grand theft incident and that she had never been able to recover from that event.

However the prosecutor on her case, Deputy District Attorney Jessica F. Miller, pointed out to the sentencing judge that the Wright’s underlying Grand Theft had an incident date of December 2017, approximately 1 year prior to the Camp Fire and that, in addition, at that time, Wright provided an address in Chico as her residence. Miller told the judge “that such misuse of the Camp Fire to attempt to justify criminal behavior is abhorrent, given the significant and far reaching effects it has had on our entire community, and should not be tolerated.”

Visiting Judge James Reilley found it would not benefit the public or be in the interests of justice to continue Wright on mandatory probation supervision and sentenced Wright to the maximum upper term of 3 years in county prison.

After Wright was sentenced she declared that those in the court were all “a bunch of f...ing liars.” She then gave Miller the middle finger as she was escorted out of the courtroom.

District Attorney Mike Ramsey noted Butte County has seen its share of disasters and it is unfortunately not uncommon for criminal defendants to wrongfully claim they were victims of either the Oroville Dam Evacuation or the Camp Fire as justification for their criminal behavior. In this case, such a false claim was quickly identified and the judge acted accordingly in imposing the upper term.