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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JURY CONVICTS MERCED MAN OF FORGERY, THEFT, AND WEAPONS CHARGES

A Merced County jury convicted 30 year - old Merced resident Frank Earl Roerhenbeck of forgery, theft by false pretenses, possession of a firearm by a felon, and being a felon in possession of ammunition on Thursday following a 3 day trial. All four of the charges are felonies. Jurors also found true allegations that Roerhenbeck has a prior "strike" conviction and has two prior prison commitments.

The charges arose out of a theft of checks and personal identifying information of the victim. Roerhenbeck then forged checks for cash, and also used the information to take money from the victim's bank account via the internet. Roerhenbeck also purchased pornographic phone calls using the information. When arrested by Deputies of the Merced County Sheriff's Office, he was found to be in possession of a shotgun and ammunition.

Deputy District Attorney Rob Carroll, who prosecuted the case, said he was pleased by verdict. Carroll also noted that citizens need to be extremely cautious with their personal financial information. "It is frightening to see how easy it is to be victimized by having financial information fall into the hands of a crook", Carroll said. Carroll added that the Sheriff's Office's efforts on this case made a successful prosecution possible, stating "If not for the excellent work of Detective John Mussotto, the defendant may very well have gotten away with this." Additionally, Carroll noted that the victim in the case was an excellent witness, and came forward to assist Deputies in solving the crimes.

Roerhenbeck will be sentenced on January 11 by Judge Ronald Hansen, who presided over the trial. Roerhenbeck faces 12 years in prison as the result of his convictions.