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REPEAT FRAUDSTER IN MERCED COUNTY DENIED
PAROLE

A Merced man, sentenced to 11 years in prison earlier this year for multiple counts of grand theft and diversion of construction funds in amounts exceeding \$100,000, but already eligible for parole following the 2016 passage of Proposition 57, will have to remain in prison following a denial by the state Board of Parole last month, the Merced County District Attorney's office announced.

Jesse Munoz, 31, pled no contest to five counts of diversion of construction funds and five counts of grand theft of personal property with a white collar criminal enhancement due to the amounts exceeding \$100,000. However, Munoz was eligible for parole after only six months of incarceration since Proposition 57 changed parole eligibility for those convicted of so-called "non-violent" crimes.

Merced County District Attorney Larry D. Morse II, who served as state co-chair of the No on 57 campaign, said "prosecutors across California are closely watching parole decisions in the aftermath of Prop 57. It is ridiculous that a person sentenced earlier this year to 11 years in prison for extensive financial crimes would even be considered for parole after serving just six months in custody."

Munoz's past criminal history in Merced County includes a conviction in 2009 of six felony counts of obtaining money by false pretense. From 2007-2008 Munoz ran advertisements in the local paper and online promising quick returns on fraudulent real estate investments. He spent five years in State prison for this conviction, and upon release in 2014, he began to defraud additional victims with a new scheme, for which he is currently serving prison time.

In denying parole to Munoz, the Board of Parole cited his current offense, a significant prior criminal history, and letters opposing release received from the District Attorney's office and five of the victims of Munoz's crimes, Morse said.