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United States Attorney Lawrence G. Brown
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CONTACT: LAUREN HORWOOD

PHONE: (916) 554-2706

usacae.edcapress@usdoj.gov

DEFENDANTS SENTENCED TO 18 MONTHS FOR DEFRAUDING CALIFORNIA STATE AGENCY

FRESNO, Calif. — United States Attorney Lawrence G. Brown announced today that United States District Judge Lawrence J. O’Neill sentenced MARIO JURADO PENA, 39, of Sanger on Friday, October 30, 2009 to 18 months in prison and \$3,120,706 in restitution for defrauding the State of California, Employment Development Department (EDD), of millions of dollars. PENA will serve his sentence in addition to the nine years he is currently serving for a narcotics conviction. Also sentenced for the same charge was his wife, JACQUELINE CHAVES JURADO, 34, of Sanger, who received one year of home detention and three years of supervised release.

This case was the product of an extensive investigation by the United States Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, and the State of California, Employment Development Department.

According to Assistant United States Attorneys James R. Terzian and Stanley A. Boone, who prosecuted the case, from January 2001 to April 24, 2003, PENA and JURADO carried out the scheme to defraud EDD, using thousands of fraudulently acquired identities of unsuspecting individuals to file fraudulent unemployment insurance claims with the EDD. The defendants acquired post office boxes throughout the State of California and directed the resulting EDD checks to be sent to these post office boxes.

Daniel R. Petrole, Acting Inspector General, United States Department of Labor, stated: “Cashing millions of dollars in unemployment insurance checks, obtained through identity theft, represents an egregious violation of the Unemployment Insurance programs. This sentence highlights my office’s determination to investigate unemployment insurance fraud by individuals who abuse the system for personal gain. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to safeguard this and other DOL programs.”

“A criminal prosecution awaits those who defraud the public, especially during this recession,” said Patrick Henning, Director of EDD. “I appreciate and applaud the joint partnership with the U.S. Attorney’s Office and the Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General in prosecuting this highly successful fraud case. EDD actively investigates and pursues anyone who defrauds the critical safety net for unemployed workers.”

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