



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY COUNTY OF KERN

CIVIC CENTER JUSTICE BUILDING
1215 TRUXTUN AVENUE
BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA 93301
(661) 868-2340, FAX: (661) 868-2700

CYNTHIA J. ZIMMER
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

JOSEPH A. KINZEL
ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

KENNETH M. RUSSELL
ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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MEDIA ADVISORY

CONTACT:
Daniela Gonzaga
661-868-2381

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Serial Thief Sentenced to Prison for Target Theft
People v. Juventino Espinoza: Kern County Superior Court Case BF202621A

(Kern County) – Kern County District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer announced a prison sentence for a theft-related case that falls under Proposition 36. On April 16, 2025, Espinoza entered an open plea before a jury was sworn in for trial - meaning he received no promises from the Court or the People of what the sentence may be if he were to admit to all charges. Espinoza was convicted of Petty Theft with Two Prior Convictions and admitted to a prior strike.

Espinoza's conviction stems from a theft that occurred on January 2, 2025, at the Target located on Mall View Road in Bakersfield. On this day, Espinoza entered the store and took multiple items, including batteries and shavers, without paying. The store's loss prevention officer recognized Espinoza from past incidents. Unknown to Espinoza, California Highway Patrol (CHP) was conducting a "blitz" operation, an operation in which officers station outside of a business and coordinate with loss prevention officers in order to apprehend thieves. CHP quickly arrested Espinoza and located items on his person valued at \$281.30.

Espinoza has ten prior convictions for shoplifting and petty theft, making him felony eligible under Proposition 36. Espinoza has a prior 2023 strike for Assault with a Deadly Weapon. As a prior strike offender, on May 15, 2025, Espinoza was sentenced to an elevated sentence of 2 years, 8 months in prison. He was also ordered to pay restitution to all victims for all his prior theft convictions. Had it not been for the passage of Proposition 36, Espinoza would have faced only misdemeanor charges with a likely sentence of no time in custody.



Juventino Espinoza

It's been nearly five months since the widely supported Proposition 36 took effect in California. In the November 2024 election, 77% of Kern County voters approved the measure - the highest approval rate in the state. This overwhelming support reflects the community's clear call for change, specifically for

stricter laws designed to protect businesses from repeat retail theft offenders. With the passage of Proposition 36, Kern County prosecutors have gained the ability to address these issues effectively and drive real change.

Before Proposition 36, prosecutors were often limited to charging only misdemeanors for petty theft, no matter how many offenses notorious thieves committed. As a result, many offenders faced only a maximum of a year in jail with many reoffending even when having pending cases. Today, thanks to Proposition 36, significant change is underway, with meaningful consequences now being enforced. However, this is not the first prison-eligible theft-related case under Proposition 36. Other notable cases include, but are not limited to:

People v. Kristopher Howard, BF202533A

On April 10, 2025, Howard pleaded to Petty Theft with Two Prior Convictions and admitted to a prior strike. Howard's conviction stems from an incident that occurred on December 26, 2024, at the Go Mini Mart located on Wilson Road in Bakersfield. Howard entered the store and walked out with a drink without paying. Once approached by the store's employee, Howard pushed the victim and said "I'm going to kill you" as he motioned to his pockets. On May 8, 2025, Howard was sentenced to four years in prison. Howard had six prior theft convictions, making him eligible for the felony charge under Proposition 36.



Kristopher Howard

People v. Adrian Samarripas, BF203487A

On March 12, 2025, Samarripas pleaded to one count of Petty Theft with Two Prior Convictions and admitted to a prior strike. He was sentenced immediately to 2 years, 8 months in prison. Samarripas conviction stems from an incident that occurred on February 25, 2025, where Officers were dispatched to the 7100 block of Ride Street in Bakersfield regarding a suspect who was holding a beer and pointing a "firearm" at passing vehicles. He was determined to not have had a firearm but was found to be in possession of beer that he had stolen from the Walgreens located on White Ln in Bakersfield. Video footage showed Samarripas take a three-pack from the store and leave without paying. Samarripas has four prior theft convictions, making him eligible for the felony charge under Proposition 36.



Adrian Samarripas

District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer commented; "Real change is happening because repeat offenders are facing real consequences. Thanks to the law Kern County voters supported, repeat offenders are no longer going through the system without accountability. They're being held in prison, where they'll serve significant time for their crimes. This is just the beginning. We're committed to working alongside law enforcement to make Kern County a safer place to live."