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DA Cynthia Zimmer Recognizes Four Outstanding Employees for Their Commitment to Crime Victims

(Bakersfield) – On February 12, 2026, District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer delivered the annual State of the Office address to the dedicated staff of the Kern County District Attorney's (KCDA) Office. A longstanding tradition of the meeting is the presentation of the Prosecutor of the Year Award, the Justice Award, and the Support Staff Person of the Year Award. While one recipient is typically selected in each category, two attorneys were named Prosecutor of the Year for 2025 in recognition of their exceptional dedication and impact on the community.

Prosecutor of the Year: Deputy District Attorney Stephanie Taconi

Mrs. Taconi is a vigorous crime victim advocate. Over the past five years, she has been assigned to the homicide unit, where she has prosecuted some of the most heinous and complex cases in the county. This year alone, she led three major trials, including the case against Kira Connerly-Burton. Burton shot and killed Michael Stubbs while both men were in their own vehicles and stopped at a traffic light in East Bakersfield. A jury found Burton guilty of first-degree murder with the special circumstance of shooting from a motor vehicle. He is currently serving a sentence of life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Prosecutor of the Year: Deputy District Attorney Cyrus Shahbazian

Mr. Shahbazian works tirelessly on behalf of crime victims. In 2025 alone, he spent an extraordinary 166 combined days in trial. His dedication to pursuing justice is reflected not only in the volume of cases he handles, but also in the complexity of these cases. Among his most significant trials was a five-month trial involving two gang-related shootings. Co-defendants Fernando Ulices Alonso, Eric Faria, Francisco Garcia, Uriel Ramirez, and Ulyses Zelayandia were convicted of conspiracy to commit the murder of Mario Bravo at the Mesa Marin Sports Complex. They were also found guilty of two counts of attempted murder stemming from a prior incident. All five co-defendants were sentenced to life terms in state prison.



Justice Award: Deputy District Attorney Babbanjit (Bobby) Singh

Mr. Singh was honored with the Justice Award for his outstanding prosecution of Manuel Gutierrez, who was convicted of first-degree murder, attempted murder, and additional felony charges. The conviction stems from an incident in which Gutierrez led law enforcement on a 100-mile vehicle pursuit. While fleeing, he drove westbound in the eastbound lanes of Highway 58 and collided head-on with a vehicle occupied by a husband and wife. At trial, Mr. Singh successfully argued that Gutierrez's conduct went far beyond recklessness and established that Gutierrez's deliberate actions directly caused the death of an innocent woman and nearly claimed the life of her husband. The jury returned a verdict of first-degree murder. Gutierrez was sentenced to 129 years to life in state prison.



Support Staff Person of the Year: Legal Process Technician Ryan Smith

Mr. Smith is one of the most hardworking individuals and plays a vital role in supporting both the attorneys and the office as a whole. Widely regarded as our office's California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS) expert, he handles requests for prior conviction packets that are critical to prosecutors. His work directly impacts the filing of elevated charges and sentencing enhancements, helping ensure that the most appropriate and serious penalties are pursued. Mr. Smith is a trusted resource for many and consistently goes the extra mile to ensure that critical tasks are completed thoroughly and efficiently.



District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer spoke about this year's award recipients, "Every member of the District Attorney's Office plays a vital role in delivering justice for crime victims. From the support professionals who assist prosecutors behind the scenes to the attorneys who stand before a jury to seek justice on victims' behalf, it takes a unified team. It is not always an easy job, but these four individuals truly stand out and exemplify the mission of this office. I recognize not only the long hours and personal sacrifices they make, but I also appreciate the support of their families, who stand beside them as they carry out their demanding responsibilities."



Left to right: Legal Process Technician Ryan Smith, Deputy DA Stephanie Taconi, DA Cynthia Zimmer, Deputy DA Cyrus Shahbazian, Deputy DA Babbanjit (Bobby) Singh