



San Diego City Attorney Jan I. Goldsmith

NEWS RELEASE

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Success in Prosecuting Drugged Driving Cases Leads California Office of Traffic Safety to Renew Grant

In one year, 282 drug DUI cases and a 98% conviction rate

The California Office of Traffic Safety has renewed a grant that puts highly trained, specialized prosecutors in the courtroom when motorists are arrested in San Diego for driving under the influence of drugs, or drugs in combination with alcohol.

The \$287,610 grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety to the San Diego City Attorney's Office will continue to fund a special Vertical Prosecution Team that prosecutes both drug and drug/alcohol-impaired driving cases throughout each step of the criminal process, from arrest through case issuance, arraignment, jury trial, conviction and sentencing.

In the past year under the 2015-2016 OTS grant, this Office prosecuted 282 drug and drug/alcohol-impaired cases (up from 150 cases the previous year), the majority of them purely drug DUI cases, with a 98 percent conviction rate. The office as a whole prosecuted over 2,700 DUI cases during this period.

Most of the drivers were impaired by one or more illegal drugs, prescription drugs, or marijuana. Prescription drugs included Alprazolam (Xanax), Amphetamine (Adderall), Buprenorphine (Subutex), Carisprodol (Soma), Clonazepam (Klonopin), Codeine/Acetaminophen (Tylenol with Codeine), Diazepam (Valium), Fentanyl (Fentora), Seroquel (Quetiapine), Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen, Hydromorphone (Dilaudid), Methylphenidate (Ritalin), Morphine (MS Contin), Oxycodone (OxyContin, Roxicodone), Oxycodone/Acetaminophen (Percocet, Percodan), Tramadol (Ultram), Lorazepam (Ativan), Methadone, Duloxetine (Cymbalta), Gabapentin (Neurontin), Risperidone (Risperdal), Trazodone (Oleptro), Sertraline (Zoloft), and Zolpidem (Ambien). Illegal drugs included methamphetamine, cocaine, PCP, heroin, ecstasy (MDMA), Ketamine, Spice (synthetic marijuana), inhalants, and hallucinogens like acid. Many were also impaired by Cannabinoids (marijuana).

“Drug-impaired driving comes in many forms -- each as dangerous as drunk driving,” City Attorney Jan Goldsmith said. **“A growing number of cases involve the misuse or abuse of prescription drugs, the increasing use of synthetic drugs such as Spice, or marijuana, often in combination with other drugs or alcohol. These cases can be successfully prosecuted only with specialized skills and knowledge. Through the continued leadership of our office, law enforcement is becoming better trained at recognizing drugged driving, and dangerous motorists are being given stiffer sentences.”**

Under the grant, San Diego law enforcement officers have received specialized training from Deputy City Attorney Taylor Garrot in better identifying suspects of drug DUI's, as well as how to effectively investigate, evaluate, and secure blood samples from those arrested under suspicion of driving while impaired by drugs and alcohol.

Garrot works with the State's Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor Program to expand knowledge and resources in the office and share information with peers and law enforcement personnel throughout the county and across the state. In addition, more than 1,800 students at targeted high schools received educational presentations about drug and alcohol impaired driving.

In March 2016, the local chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving named Garrot as its Outstanding Prosecutor of the Year for 2015 for his exceptional work prosecuting drugged drivers under the OTS grant program.

The purpose of the program is to prevent impaired driving and reduce alcohol and drug-impaired traffic fatalities and injuries. In 2013 there were 69 deaths and 1,649 serious injuries as a result of DUI crashes in the County of San Diego.

“When there is a trained, seasoned and committed team working serious DUI cases, prosecutors get the positive results needed,” said OTS Director Rhonda Craft. **“The Office of Traffic Safety and the San Diego City Attorney’s Office will be working together to help keep the streets and highways safe across the City of San Diego and throughout the state.”**

Funding for the program comes from a grant by the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

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