

OFFICE OF THE
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***** PRESS RELEASE *****

*SANTA MARIA JURY CONVICTS DEFENDANT OF FALSE IMPRISONMENT AND PERSONAL
INFLICTION OF GREAT BODILY INJURY UPON JANE DOE*

People v. Brad Zack Berch, Santa Barbara Superior Court Case Number 22CR05483

On June 12, 2024, a jury in Santa Maria convicted 64-year-old Brad Zack Berch of Felony False Imprisonment, in violation of Penal Code section 236. Additionally, the jury found that the defendant personally inflicted great bodily injury upon Jane Doe under circumstances involving domestic violence, in violation of Penal Code section 12022.7(e).

The charges stem from an incident on June 16, 2022. On that day, Berch visited Jane Doe's residence to discuss their relationship issues. Initially agreeing to accompany him for a drive in his truck, Jane Doe soon found herself subjected to erratic driving and verbal abuse. Despite her repeated pleas to stop and let her out, Berch refused.

After circling Jane Doe's street several times, Berch eventually made a U-turn and slowed down. Jane Doe attempted to exit the vehicle by removing her seatbelt and opening the door, but Berch accelerated, forcing her to abandon her attempt to escape out of concern for her safety. As they approached her street, Jane Doe declared her intention to leave the vehicle, to which Berch responded with profanity, insisting she remain.

Berch then made a sudden left turn onto Jane Doe's street at an unsafe speed. This maneuver caused Jane Doe to be thrown from her seat, out of the open door, and onto the road. As a result of Berch's reckless driving, Jane Doe sustained a compression fracture to her spine, severe bruising, and endured prolonged difficulty walking. Fortunately, a good Samaritan came to her aid and promptly contacted the police.

During the trial, Jane Doe recounted previous incidents of domestic violence dating from 2015 to 2020, illustrating a pattern of physical abuse, intimidation, and manipulation by Berch aimed at coercing her into remaining in the relationship.

Santa Barbara County District Attorney John T. Savrnoch thanked the jury for their diligent deliberation in arriving at a verdict. DA Savrnoch noted Jane Doe's strength and courage throughout the ordeal, stating, "Her resilience has been an inspiration." DA Savrnoch acknowledged Victim Advocate Ofelia Galvan for providing unwavering support to the victim throughout the legal proceedings. Furthermore, he recognized the good Samaritan who assisted Jane Doe and promptly called 911, stating, "Their quick actions were crucial in ensuring Jane Doe received timely medical assistance."

Savrnoch also commended Officer Rick Larson and Officer Carlton Streebel of the California Highway Patrol for their diligent investigation of the case. Finally, he thanked Deputy District Attorney Noah Abolafia-Rosenzweig for his role in prosecuting the case successfully.

This case highlights the serious and ongoing nature of domestic violence and the impact it has on victims. If you or a loved one is experiencing domestic violence, there are resources in the community that can help. Domestic Violence Solutions (DVS) of Santa Barbara County is one resource available to our community. DVS provides safety, shelter, and support for individuals and families affected by domestic violence and collaborate with community partners to raise awareness regarding the cause, prevalence and impact.

For immediate assistance, DVS's 24-hour crisis line is (805) 964-5245, and further information is available on their website at <https://dvsolutions.org/>.

Following the guilty verdict, the People's request for remand was denied, and Berch remains out on supervised release. Sentencing is scheduled for July 23, 2024, at 8:30 am before the Honorable Steven Dunkle in Department 7 of the Santa Maria Superior Court. Berch faces a maximum sentence of 6 years in prison.

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