



## HUMBOLDT COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE PAUL V. GALLEGOS • DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Re: Law Enforcement Response to Occupy Humboldt**

**Date:** December 5, 2011

**Contact:** District Attorney Paul Gallegos

**Phone:** (707) 268-2571, (707) 267-4400

In early November, the Humboldt County District Attorney's Office requested that the Eureka Police Department act to remove the tents erected on the Courthouse lawn located at 825 Fifth Street in Eureka. These tents appeared to have been erected by participants in the Occupy Wall Street protest being held in the same area.

District Attorney Paul Gallegos said that public safety concerns prompted the action because the tents were essentially unauthorized and unmonitored structures in close proximity to the courthouse.

"The right to protest is guaranteed by the First Amendment and our action was in no way designed to interfere with that," said Gallegos. "But we do have an obligation to protect the community. The safety of the approximately 300 employees and 300 jail inmates in the county jail had to be our priority."

The Eureka Police Department has continued to respond to general public safety concerns and specific requests by county officials to ensure that protestors remain peaceful, do not set up or maintain tents, structures or other means of camping on courthouse property, or interfere with the public's ability to enjoy public spaces.

"We ask for everyone's patience and understanding both toward their fellow citizens and toward their elected officials who are trying to find the middle ground between protecting the public and protecting individual rights and freedoms," Gallegos said. "The Eureka Police Department acts at the direction and under the authority of the City of Eureka and responds to community and citizen complaints. If officers observe what they believe to be violations of the law, they must respond with admonitions and/or arrests. If individuals refuse to comply with lawful orders or unnecessarily escalate a situation and put themselves, the officers and others at risk, those individuals will face arrest and prosecution."