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NEWS RELEASE

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**District Attorney Lynne Abraham Files Federal Motion to Intervene
to Oppose Prisoners' Request for Releases**

Emphasis is on Public Safety

District Attorney Lynne Abraham today announced that she has filed a motion to intervene in a Federal lawsuit challenging detention conditions for persons arrested in Philadelphia. In the Federal lawsuit, known as *Bowers v. City of Philadelphia*, arrested defendants are challenging the conditions of their detention and asking for a Federal Court order releasing arrested criminals if they are not processed more quickly by the Philadelphia Prisons.

“Public safety is my most important concern,” said the District Attorney. “The last time prisoners were released by a prison cap order, they unleashed a crime wave on the citizens of Philadelphia. I will not accept the prisoners’ lawyer’s position that a Federal judge should release prisoners to address claims about prison conditions.”

In her intervention motion, the District Attorney cited to crimes committed by prisoners released by the Federal Court under a prison cap imposed in the 1980’s in response to similar claims by prisoners. Because of the previous prisoner release orders, the number of Philadelphia fugitives nearly tripled; outstanding bench warrants skyrocketed from 18,000 to 50,000. In one 18-month period (from January 1993 to June 1994), Philadelphia rearrested for new crimes 9,732 defendants released by the Federal court order. These crimes included 79 murders, 959 robberies, 2215 drug dealing cases, 701 burglaries, 2,748 thefts, 90 rapes, 14 kidnappings, 1,113 assaults, 264 gun crimes, and 127 drunk driving cases.

The District Attorney’s intervention motion is filed based on a Federal law passed in 1996. Many of the Federal Law provisions sought to address problems that arose with the Philadelphia prison cap. The Federal law, known as the Prison Litigation Reform Act, grants prosecutors the right to oppose prisoner release orders in Federal courts. The law also precludes Federal courts from ordering prisoner releases unless they are a “last resort” remedy.