



First 5
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

First 5 Santa Barbara County

1 E. Anapamu St., Suite 200 • Santa Barbara, CA 93101

(805) 884-8085 • FAX (805) 564-8586

www.first5santabarbaracounty.org

P R E S S R E L E A S E

News Media Contacts:

Nicole Tanner, First 5 SBC (805) 886-0632

Megan Rheinschild, District Attorney's Office (805) 568-2408

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**BABY'S DEATH CRITICAL REMINDER OF NEED FOR AWARENESS
OF SAFE BABY LAW**

**County District Attorney's Office and First 5 Santa Barbara County Partner to
Help Spread the Word and Save Lives**

(SANTA BARBARA, CA)—The Santa Barbara County District Attorney's office and First 5 Santa Barbara County have partnered to raise countywide public awareness of the Safely Surrendered Baby Law in the hopes of saving babies' lives and helping mothers in crisis.

The state law, which went into effect in 2001, was created to help bring an end to infant abandonment in California. The law allows a mother or person with lawful custody to bring an unwanted baby three days old or younger to any hospital in Santa Barbara County without fear of prosecution for child abandonment. As of June of 2008, 251 babies have been safely surrendered in California.

"Mothers need to know their options when making life or death decisions about their newborns," said Acting Assistant District Attorney, Gordon Auchincloss. "Under the Safely Surrendered Baby Law, a mother can bring her newborn to a hospital and know, first and foremost, that her baby will be cared for, and second, that she can do so confidentially, legally and without fear of criminal prosecution."

At the hospital, a parent is not required to give their name when surrendering their baby within three days of birth. Once surrendered, a bracelet will be placed on the baby for identification and a matching bracelet will be given to the parent. The law allows for at least a 14-day consideration period, which begins the day the child is

voluntarily surrendered. During this period, the person who surrendered the infant can return to the hospital to reclaim the child. The bracelet will help identify the child if the parent changes his or her mind during the cooling off period. Once safely surrendered to hospital personnel, the baby will be examined and given medical treatment, if needed. Then the baby will be placed in a foster home or pre-adoptive home.

On the morning of March 3, 2010, a baby girl was discovered in a trash bin in Redondo Beach. Two days later, Santa Barbara resident, Jessie Lauren Canfield was arrested on suspicion of murder. Canfield confirmed that she gave birth to the baby while attending a party in Redondo Beach and had put the baby in the garbage bin.

Each year, more than 30,000 babies are abandoned illegally across the United States, left in dumpsters or public bathrooms, often resulting in the baby's death. There is no single profile of a mother who abandons her baby. Often the mother is in denial about her pregnancy and she often conceals it from friends and family. Mothers who abandon their babies are typically in distress, afraid and feel as though they have nowhere to turn for help.

"Our hope is that in our county we can continue to raise awareness of the Baby Safe Law and the resources available to individuals in crisis so that we can prevent tragedies like this from happening again," said Pat Wheatley, Executive Director of First 5 Santa Barbara County.

In Santa Barbara County, individuals can call 2-1-1 for local resources and crisis support. Information on the Safely Surrendered Baby Law is available at www.babysafe.ca.gov.

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