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**2011 HOT-CHECK WARRANT AMNESTY PERIOD AND ROUNDUP
ANNOUNCED**

Arrest roundups to follow publication of the names

El Paso County Attorney Jo Anne Bernal and El Paso County Sheriff Richard Wiles today announced that they will be joined by Constables from Precincts 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7 in conducting a roundup of individuals with outstanding hot check warrants in El Paso County.

This cooperative effort by local law enforcement to arrest hot check writers will be preceded by an amnesty period in which residents can pay their outstanding amounts without being arrested.

The amnesty period runs from Monday, February 7 through Friday, February 18, 2011. Before the amnesty period starts, the County Attorney's Office will make public the names and addresses of thousands of individuals with outstanding hot-check warrants. The list will be published on Sunday, February 6, 2011 on the County of El Paso's web-site and other local media outlets. Additionally, the full list of names will be published in that Sunday's edition of Diario de El Paso.

Individuals with pending warrants who want to avoid the publication of their names must pay their outstanding balances by Friday, February 4, 2011.

Individuals who take advantage of the amnesty period and pay their outstanding balances before Friday, February 18, 2011, will avoid arrest during an upcoming county-wide warrant round-up. Additionally, they will save money by not having to pay additional fees, such as court costs, attorney fees, and the cost of posting a bond.

Residents with outstanding hot check warrants can make their payments in person at the following locations:

- **El Paso County Courthouse**
500 E. San Antonio, room 503
M- F 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- **El Paso County Ysleta Annex**
9521 Socorro Rd., Suite A-3
M - F 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Forms of payment accepted include credit cards, money orders, cashier checks, and cash; however, those paying with cash will have to bring the exact amount (cashiers cannot give change).

In addition, residents can make payments online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through “Hot Check E-pay,” by visiting the El Paso County Attorney’s Office web-page at www.epcounty.com/CA

For more information regarding hot check payments and balances please contact the El Paso County Attorney's Office Hot Check Unit at 546-2051 or visit the El Paso County Attorney’s Office web site at: www.epcounty.com/CA.

There are currently more than 3,075 names in the County's hot checks warrants list who owe local merchants more than \$2.76 million dollars. During last fiscal year (2009-2010) the Hot Check Unit collected more than \$930,000 dollars in outstanding hot checks. So far, during the first 4 months of fiscal year 2010-2011 (October-January), the County Attorney’s Office has collected over \$270,000.

El Paso County Attorney Jo Anne Bernal is encouraging individuals with outstanding warrants for writing hot checks to take advantage of this opportunity. In order to facilitate the payment of outstanding amounts, **for the first time the County Attorney’s Office will be accepting payment plans for qualifying individuals.**

"The County Attorney’s Office supports local small businesses by collecting their insufficient funds checks at no cost. We also want to make it easier for local residents who might have broken the law unintentionally to take care of their responsibilities before they face serious consequences. Hot check writers who do not seize this opportunity will be fully prosecuted for committing a criminal offense; this is their last chance." Bernal explained.

El Paso Sheriff Richard Wiles explained that after the amnesty period is over, officers from all participating law enforcement agencies will go out unannounced in search of those individuals with outstanding warrants who ignored this warning.

“Individuals who write worthless checks are in reality stealing money from the merchant who receives a check. Writing a hot check is a crime, not a civil violation, and my office is committed to fight all types of crimes. We are coordinating with all participating law enforcement agencies to conduct a very efficient county-wide warrant round-up. We will look for offenders anyplace they might be, at their homes, at their places of employment, with relatives,” Wiles concluded.

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