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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **City of Hobbs Addresses Shoplifting**

The City of Hobbs has been alerted to an increasing number of shoplifting crimes in Hobbs, New Mexico. Many of the alleged victims of these crimes are local small businesses and other retail establishments. To meet the needs of the community, the City of Hobbs City Attorney's Office, in conjunction with the Hobbs Police Department, will dedicate personnel and resources to ensure that all reported shoplifting crimes are thoroughly investigated and prosecuted. Shoplifting is punishable as a misdemeanor with penalties up to a \$500 fine and 90 days in jail per occurrence in Hobbs (Hobbs Municipal Code 9.24.100(B)). Importantly, every individual charged with a crime is considered innocent until proven guilty by a court of law. During this holiday shopping season and moving forward, it is the goal of the City of Hobbs to support the local business community.

City Attorney Efren Cortez states, "The common misconception regarding shoplifting crimes is that there is no 'victim' for the crime. In truth, shoplifting crimes victimize the business owners through lost profits and the consumer through increased prices. During a time when our businesses are experiencing a supply slowdown nationwide, shoplifting crimes only serve to compound the problem for the business and the consumer alike. We will ensure that we honor the rights of the victims, as well as the accused, through this endeavor. Our office is honored to be able to provide some assistance to the community through successful prosecutions – and subsequent deterrence – of shoplifting crimes."

Hobbs Police Department Chief of Police John Ortolano states, "Property crime rates in New Mexico are extremely high when compared to other states. The Hobbs Police Department takes shoplifting very seriously, because these types of property crimes can lead to other more serious offenses. I urge the public to assist us during these investigations by being a cooperating witness if they observed the offense taking place."

The damage caused by this crime often affects consumers as a whole as companies pass on the cost by raising prices and putting more responsibility on employees. As the holiday shopping season arrives, the City of Hobbs intends to increase education and awareness of shoplifting and encourage the community to be aware. It is often the information from a witness that leads detectives to identifying the suspect and bringing them to prosecution. Businesses are encouraged to come forward with their concerns. All residents, visitors, and shoppers are encouraged to be aware and speak up if they witness such activity in an effort to support the local business community and protect the health, safety, and property of all residents.

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