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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Price Gouging After Declared Emergencies Is Unlawful**

***COLUSA, California*** – On March 4<sup>th</sup> 2020, California Governor Gavin Newsom declared a state of emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in this state. Since then there have been allegations reported through social media of possible price gouging in Colusa County.

California law generally prohibits businesses and individuals from raising prices for 30 days after an emergency declaration. Under Penal Code Section 396, it is illegal to charge a price for essential goods and services that is more than 10 percent higher than the price charged immediately before the emergency declaration, a practice commonly known as price gouging. The law applies to hotels/motels, consumer food items, goods or services used for emergency cleanup, emergency supplies, medical supplies, home heating oil, building materials, housing, transportation, freight, storage services, gasoline, and other motor fuels. Price gouging is subject to criminal prosecution and carries a penalty of up to one year in jail and a fine of up to \$5,000 per violation, plus mandatory restitution.

Colusa County businesses routinely come together with their community in times of need and emergency. The Colusa County District Attorney's Office wants to remind anyone who would give into the temptation to benefit from this emergency that our office takes price gouging very seriously and will prosecute offenders.

Suspected price gouging can be reported to the Colusa County District Attorney's Office by calling the investigations unit at 530-458-0545.