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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Real Estate Fraud Resources in Yolo County

(Woodland, CA) – January 16, 2014- The dream of home ownership remains one of the most important goals of many Yolo County citizens. The Yolo County Real Estate Fraud Advisory Team (“REFAT”) brings together industry professionals and law enforcement to protect residents of Yolo County from becoming victims of real estate fraud. Yolo REFAT is comprised of the Yolo County District Attorney’s Office, the Yolo County Board of Realtors, the Yolo County Clerk-Recorder’s Office, the Yolo County Assessor’s Office and industry professionals from across Yolo County.

From foreclosure scams and loan modification scams to rent skimming and mortgage fraud, real estate fraud comes in a variety of forms and can have a devastating impact on its victims. Yolo REFAT is dedicated to educating the public about these scams, investigating suspected fraud, and aggressively prosecuting these cases. Through the collaboration of the public, real estate professionals, and law enforcement, real estate fraud of all types can be detected and prosecuted.

As a recent example: On January 9, 2014, Edwin Barker, 53, of Davis was convicted of attempted grand theft, a felony, based on false and misleading documents filed in the Yolo County Recorder’s Office. After purchasing two properties on the open market, the defendant filed Preliminary Change of Ownership Reports along with the deeds to the properties. Preliminary Change of Ownership Reports are used by the assessor to appraise the value of property and determine the appropriate property taxes. By falsely indicating that he obtained the properties through trusts, Barker sought to avoid reassessment of the value of the properties and thereby lower his property taxes. The Yolo County Assessor’s Office discovered the suspected fraud and reported it to law enforcement. After the Sheriff’s Office completed a criminal investigation, the Yolo County District Attorney’s Office filed a criminal case and obtained the felony conviction. Sentencing is on February 20, 2014, in front of the Honorable Paul K. Richardson. The defendant faces up to four years on felony probation.

Awareness and collaboration are the most successful methods of preventing real estate fraud. Should you know of fraudulent real estate activities in Yolo County, you are urged to contact us on our newly established Fraud Hot Line phone number at 855-4-YOLO DA (855-496-5632). Reports of suspected fraud can also be made online at www.yoloda.org/fraud.htm. The District Attorney’s Office also has a “Fraud Reporting E-mail Address”: Fraud@yoloda.org.

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