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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 4th, 2018**

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GARCIA DENIED PAROLE FOR 1995 HOMICIDE

Santa Cruz County District Attorney Jeffrey S. Rosell announced today that on May 3, 2018, the Parole Board at the Valley State Prison in Chowchilla, CA, denied murderer Israel Jerome Garcia's request for parole for a period of three years.

On May 10, 1995, Garcia knocked on his landlord's, V.G. "Tex" Townsend, 77, door pretending to visit him as he had many times before. Unbeknownst to the victim, Garcia had been planning to rob and kill him for close to a week. After chatting with Mr. Townsend for approximately 20 minutes, Garcia suddenly lunged at him with a 2-inch by 1-inch razor blade and slashed and stabbed him 44 times. During the brutal killing, the victim begged Garcia for mercy. After several kicks to the head, the victim attempted to crawl away, but ultimately succumbed to his injuries. At the murder trial, the coroner testified that it took the victim 5-10 minutes to die. Garcia was convicted at jury trial by former Santa Cruz County District Attorney Bob Lee, and was sentenced to prison in October 1996.

In prison, Garcia spent his first 18 years committing numerous crimes, including the trafficking of narcotics to the outside community with the help of his wife. In 2001, he slashed another inmate in the face with a razor blade. In 2014, Mr. Garcia claimed to have an epiphany and began self-help programming at the prison, wrote an apology letter to the victim, and has been crime-free for the last four years.

Assistant District Attorney Kristina Oven argued at the hearing that the depravity and evil inside Garcia, which led him to torture the victim to death in one of the most heinous and callous murders in our County, could not be rehabilitated by a mere four years of programming; nor was Garcia, a lifelong manipulator, to be trusted when he claimed at the hearing that he could never kill again. The Parole Board agreed and found that the particularly vicious manner in which Garcia killed Mr. Townsend demanded a lengthy period of rehabilitation which had not yet been achieved.