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**\* NEWS RELEASE \***

**CRIMINAL AND CIVIL LAWSUITS BROUGHT IN THE MAY 2008 DEATH  
OF 17-YEAR OLD FARM-WORKER MARIA ISAVEL VASQUEZ JIMENEZ**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**April 23, 2009**

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San Joaquin County District Attorney James P. Willett announced today that his office has charged Maria De Los Angeles Colunga, Elias Armenta, and Raul Martinez with involuntary manslaughter, one felony Labor Code violation, and five misdemeanor violations of the Labor Code, stemming from the unsafe working conditions which contributed to the death of 17-year old farm worker Maria Isavel Vasquez Jimenez in a Farmington vineyard on May 14, 2008..

The criminal complaint alleges that Colunga, Armenta, and Martinez violated occupational safety and health standards, including the failure to provide reasonable access to potable water, shade, failure to provide heat illness training, and failure to make provisions for prompt medical attention in the case of serious injury at a remote location.

Additionally, a civil enforcement action was filed today in San Joaquin County Superior Court charging Merced Farm Labor, the company's owner, Maria De Los Angeles Colunga, and West Coast Grape Farming, Inc., with violations of California labor laws. The civil complaint alleges that Merced Farm Labor and West Coast Grape Farming, Inc., which owned the vineyard and contracted with Merced Farm Labor for labor contractors, violated numerous provisions of the California Labor Code and California Code of Regulations on Industrial Relations, and as such, engaged in unfair business practices. The violations include failing to provide training to employees about heat illness prevention, failing to provide employees access to potable drinking water, failing to provide access to an area with shade, and failing to report immediately a serious injury, illness or death of an employee occurring in a place of employment.

These cases are based on the collaborative work of the California Governor's Office, State of California Division of Occupational Safety and Health, State of California Department of Labor Standards Enforcement, California Attorney General's Office, and the District Attorney Environmental Prosecutions Unit of San Joaquin County.