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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**HOT CHECK WRITERS ARRESTED DURING OPERATION
“BOUNCE” ROUND UP**

On Saturday August 26 at 6 AM, officers from the El Paso Sheriff Department, the County Attorney’s Office, the US Marshals Office, the Tax Assessor and County Constables initiated an arrest warrant round up, as part of Operation Bounce.

In total, 11 teams went out in search of 104 individuals with outstanding arrest warrants for writing hot checks.

In 6 hours, the officers were able to detain 14 fugitives, but only 5 were booked into the County jail. The other nine individuals paid the outstanding amounts and fees, and were released immediately.

With today’s round up, the County Attorney’s Office was able to collect another \$8,868 for local merchants. That amount, along with the approximately 125,000 that were collected during the amnesty period, bring the total collections of Operation Bounce to more than \$133,000.

Operation Bounce is not over. During the next couple of weeks, officers from the County Attorney’s Office will keep searching for individuals with outstanding arrest warrants for writing hot checks.

Wednesday August 9 the El Paso County Attorney José Rodríguez, El Paso Sheriff Leo Samaniego, County Constables and members of several other law enforcement agencies announced the implementation of Operation “Bounce”, a major

initiative directed towards the prosecution and collection of money from hot check writers.

The operation will begin on Sunday, August 13 with the publication of the more than 4,500 names of individuals with theft by check outstanding warrants, representing almost \$ 4 million dollars.

The publication of the list marks the start of a 2-week amnesty period during which the hot check writers may avoid arrest and criminal prosecution if they voluntarily pay off their hot-check balances at the El Paso County Courthouse.

During this period, the Hot Check payment windows at the County Attorney's Office (500 E. San Antonio, room 503) will remain open Monday thru Friday from 7 AM to 6 PM. Individuals must pay the exact amount due. Change is not available at the windows. Payments can be made by money order, cashiers checks, cash (exact amount only), or Visa and Master Card credit cards. No debit or check cards will be accepted.

Operation "Bounce" will begin immediately after the end of the amnesty period, on August 26. Deputies from the Sheriff Office, the County Constables, and several other local law enforcement agencies will start a countywide arrest warrant round-up. The round-up will consist of officers going out and arresting hot-check writers at their homes or place of employment.

During a similar operation conducted earlier this year with the El Paso Police Department, the County Attorney's Office recovered more than \$180,000 for local business. Still it currently has almost five thousand outstanding hot check warrants that represent around \$ 3.95 million dollars owed to local merchants.

"Although it has been decreasing over the years, theft by check is still a serious problem in our community. Local small businesses often face financial difficulties because of their losses from hot checks", said County Attorney José Rodríguez.

"Operation Bounce is just one of several initiatives from our office directed towards decreasing this problem in our community. We are making it easier for merchants to report hot checks; we are giving them electronic access to their accounts 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to find out about any payments made to their account. And we are getting ready to begin a "most wanted" type of program for hot check writers", explained Rodríguez.

For more information regarding hot check payments and balances; please contact the El Paso County Attorney's Office Hot Check Unit at 546-2051.

The complete and updated list of individuals with theft by check outstanding warrants has been posted in the El Paso County web site at: www.epcounty.com

