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**PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**EL PASO COUNTY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE COLLECTS MORE  
THAN ONE MILLION DOLLARS IN HOT CHECKS**

**Interested merchants can get free collection services from the agency**

El Paso County Attorney José R. Rodríguez announced today that, during the first 9 months of fiscal year 2007-2008, his office has been able to collect more than 1.2 million dollars in restitution and fees for local merchants. During the same period, the County Attorney's Office received 9,168 checks for collection.

In its effort to prosecute the crime of "theft by check", during the same period the County Attorney's Office filed more than 1,900 criminal cases against individuals with outstanding hot check amounts.

El Paso County Attorney José R. Rodríguez explained that writing hot checks is a crime under Texas law, which may result in up to one year in jail and/or a fine of up to \$4,000, depending on the amount of the check.

"We take our responsibility of prosecuting hot check writers very seriously. Because of hot check writers, many local small businesses face serious financial difficulties. We all suffer the consequences because hot checks increase merchants' costs, and as a result, they may decide to increase prices to offset their losses," Rodríguez explained.

"We want everybody to know that the staff of the El Paso County Attorney's Office is here to help them collect on their hot checks. The service is free and available to anyone in El Paso County," Rodríguez said.

Individuals or businesses interested in taking advantage of the free collections service are encouraged to attend the annual "Hot Check Seminar", to be held on Wednesday August 13, 2008, at the El Paso County Courthouse (500 E. San Antonio) from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Participants will learn how to reduce the chances of taking a hot check, how they can collect on the hot checks they already have, and how to access a new online service that allows merchants to receive instant notification about payments made to their hot check accounts 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The seminar is free, open to the public, and reservations are not required. Individuals requesting more information, or who wish to receive a free hot check packet, can call the Hot Check Unit of the El Paso County Attorney's Office, at 546-2051.

**WHO: County Attorney's Hot Check Unit**

**WHAT: Free Hot Check Seminar**

**WHEN: Wednesday August 13, 2008 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.**

**WHERE: El Paso County Courthouse, room 303**

**500 E. San Antonio**

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