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COUNTY OF SOLANO**

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PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Solano County District Attorney Krishna Abrams today issued a price gouging alert to consumers following the recent statewide public health emergency declaration responding to novel coronavirus in California. District Attorney Abrams reminds all residents that price gouging is illegal in all California communities during the declared state of emergency under Penal Code Section 396.

“Illegal price gouging during a time of crisis, hurts the most vulnerable among us. Our office is fully committed to investigating and prosecuting any violators who seek to take advantage of the current situation,” said District Attorney Abrams. “California’s price gouging law protects people impacted by an emergency from illegal price gouging on medical supplies, food, gas, and other essential supplies. Anyone who has been the victim of price gouging can file a complaint by contacting the Consumer/Environmental Protection Unit through my office’s website at www.solanoda.com, by calling the (707) 784-6859, or by emailing us at dacepu@solanocounty.com.”

During the state of emergency, Penal Code section 396 prohibits businesses, retailers, and other service or goods providers from charging a price that is more than ten percent higher than the amount previously charged by that business before the declaration. Covered goods and services include food, emergency supplies, medical supplies, building materials, gasoline, transportation, freight and storage services and hotel accommodations. The law also applies to repair or reconstruction services, emergency cleanup services, transportation and rental housing. The only way businesses covered by section 396 can increase prices by more than 10 percent is if the business can show that its own costs have increased.

Violators of the price gouging statute are subject to criminal prosecution that can result in a one-year imprisonment in county jail and/or a fine of up to \$10,000. Violators are also subject to civil enforcement actions including civil penalties of up to \$2,500 per violation, injunctive relief, and mandatory restitution. The Attorney General and local district attorneys can enforce the statute.