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REPEAT DUI OFFENDER SENTENCED TO 15 YEARS TO LIFE FOR MURDER FOLLOWING FATAL IMPAIRED DRIVING CRASH

On June 16, 2026, Leigha Linae Addington (33, of Fresno) was sentenced to fifteen years to life in state prison following her conviction for second-degree murder in the death of Brenda Sue Ricci (65, of Fresno), who was killed in an impaired driving collision on April 17, 2021.

The sentence follows a jury trial that concluded on April 15, 2026. Jurors deliberated for less than one hour before finding Addington guilty on all counts and allegations. The jury convicted Addington of second-degree murder, driving on a suspended license causing injury, and driving with a blood alcohol concentration above .01% while on probation for driving under the influence. Jurors also found true six aggravating factors. The sentence was handed down by the Honorable Gabriel Brickey of the Fresno County Superior Court, who presided over the trial. Multiple members of Ricci's family attended both the trial and sentencing hearing.

Just before 5:00 p.m. on April 17, 2021, Addington was driving westbound on State Route 180 near Cornelia Avenue when she allowed her GMC Sierra to drift onto the right dirt shoulder of the roadway. Addington then overcorrected, crossing into oncoming traffic and causing a head-on collision with Ricci, who was traveling eastbound. The collision caused catastrophic injuries to Ricci, who fought for her life for nearly a month before succumbing to those injuries.

During sentencing, family members described Brenda as a loving wife, sister, aunt, and friend whose kindness, creativity, and generosity touched countless lives. Her sister, Teri Jones, recalled that even as a child, Brenda was her protector, holding her hand each night during a month-long family trip when she was afraid to sleep. Family members spoke of Brenda's lifelong commitment to caring for others, her ability to make holidays and

special occasions memorable for those she loved, and the lasting void left by her death. They noted that countless milestones, celebrations, and everyday moments will forever be missing her presence.

Addington was evaluated by officers with the California Highway Patrol and was determined to be under the influence. Preliminary breath testing showed Addington had a blood alcohol concentration of at least .26%. Subsequent blood testing also revealed the presence of cocaine and tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the primary psychoactive component of marijuana.

Addington had previously been warned by the courts that driving under the influence is dangerous to human life and could result in a murder charge if someone was killed. Despite those warnings, she continued to drive impaired. She had suffered two prior DUI convictions, including a conviction in Stanislaus County on January 29, 2021, less than three months before the fatal collision. At the time of the crash, Addington was on DUI probation and required to operate a vehicle equipped with an ignition interlock device.

This case serves as a reminder that choosing to drive under the influence can have irreversible consequences. Drivers who continue to drive impaired after being warned of the dangers may face murder charges when their actions result in the loss of life.

The Fresno County District Attorney's Office would like to thank the California Highway Patrol for their investigative work, dedication to this case, and continued efforts to keep our roadways safe from impaired drivers.

This case was successfully prosecuted by Senior Deputy District Attorney Steven Ueltzen with assistance from Senior District Attorney Investigator Randall Paulson. The case was prosecuted as part of the Alcohol and Drug Impaired Driver Vertical Prosecution Program, which is funded by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

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