

## Lake County judge rejects molestation plea deal



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PRESS DEMOCRAT (SANTA ROSA, CA)  
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A Lake County judge has rejected a plea agreement made between the state Attorney General's Office and a former Lake County sheriff's deputy accused of molesting a young teenager.

Derik Navarro, 39, had pleaded guilty Dec. 7 to having sex with his 14-year-old babysitter. Under the agreement, he faced up to three years formal probation and three months in county jail for admitting to one count of unlawful intercourse with a child under the age of 16, state officials said.

The case now will go to trial.

Sheriff Frank Rivero had called the agreement a "travesty of justice" and wrote to to the Attorney General's Office and the sentencing judge, Andrew Blum.

"I am just very happy the judge had the moxie and gumption and wherewithal to reject this plea bargain," Rivero said Monday. "It was a good day for law enforcement and a good day for justice and a good day for all victims of sexual abuse," he said.

He acknowledged that the victim and her family were upset because they did not want the case to go to trial, but he said the judge's rejection was for the greater good.

The Attorney General's Office will not comment on the ruling, said spokeswoman Lynda Gledhill. The office handled the case because Lake County District Attorney Don Anderson declared a conflict in the case. He said he previously represented Navarro.

County prosecutors initially charged Navarro with 18 felony counts involving two victims. One victim was dropped from the case.

The sexual misconduct occurred in 2005 and 2006, officials said. Navarro was fired in 2007 after five years with the department following an investigation into the allegations.

Blum said in court he had two choices: accept the plea bargain in its entirety or reject it entirely. He was

quoted in the Lake County Record-Bee website as calling the plea bargain a "ridiculously lenient sentence."

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