



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SEAL BEACH POLICE PROMOTES PROPOSITION 36 TO BOOST COMMUNITY AWARENESS

Seal Beach, CA – Following the release of a viral Instagram reel on Sunday, December 22, highlighting a recent retail theft incident and the changes brought by Proposition 36, the Seal Beach Police Department is providing additional details about the case. The video, part of the department's *"Don't Steal in Seal"* social media campaign, has garnered significant public attention and serves as an educational tool on the updated theft-related laws in California.

The incident featured in the reel occurred on December 4, 2024, at the ULTA beauty store in the City of Seal Beach, where three individuals stole an estimated \$1,635.24 worth of merchandise. Officers detained the suspects – identified as Destiny Bender (24) and Deanna Hines (24), both from Long Beach, and Michelle Pitts (26) of Signal Hill – after a brief foot pursuit through the parking lot. The suspects were also linked to an earlier theft at a nearby Kohl's store through surveillance footage.

All three individuals were booked into the Orange County Jail on charges of Grand Theft (PC 487(a)), Conspiracy to Commit a Crime (PC 182(a)(1)), and Resisting Arrest (PC 148(a)(1)).

Proposition 36, which voters approved in November 2024, creates stricter penalties for organized theft and expands law enforcement capabilities to combat repeat offenders. Specifically, it permits felony charges for petty theft with prior convictions, allows aggregating the value of stolen goods from multiple thefts to meet the \$950 felony threshold, and introduces enhancements for theft crimes involving two or more offenders acting in concert.

Chief of Police Michael Henderson commented, "Proposition 36 gives law enforcement and prosecutors much-needed resources to address the growing issue of organized retail theft. This legislation sends a clear message that our communities will not tolerate those who prey on businesses and disrupt public safety."

In addition to proactive patrols, the Seal Beach Police Department has embraced creative ways to deter crime and engage with the community through its social media campaign. With the slogan, "*Don't Steal in Seal*," the department highlights arrests and educates the public on the consequences of committing crimes in Seal Beach. These posts feature videos and messages designed to connect with the community and discourage criminal activity. The campaign has received widespread praise for this innovative approach and effectiveness in engaging the community.

Chief Henderson added, "Our social media campaign, '*Don't Steal in Seal*,' has been instrumental in raising public awareness and deterring crime. By creatively showcasing our efforts, we're fostering community trust and delivering a strong warning to potential offenders."

The Seal Beach Police Department remains committed to proactive measures, including increased patrols, rapid response efforts, and innovative outreach campaigns, to deter retail theft and protect local businesses.

Residents are encouraged to remain vigilant and report suspicious activity by calling the Seal Beach Police Department non-emergency line at (562) 594-7232.

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