

**For Immediate Release:**

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**AG Balderas Announces Another Repeat Offender Taken off the Streets, Resulting from Partnership With APD Organized Crime Unit and Major Retailer**

*ALBUQUERQUE, NM---* Today, Attorney General Hector Balderas announced the conviction and sentencing of another repeat offender as a result of a partnership between APD and Home Depot's Asset Protection Team. Michael Johnston was sentenced today to 2 years in the Department of Corrections by Judge Stan Whitaker of the Second Judicial District Court following his guilty plea to two counts of felony shoplifting.

"Brazen retail criminals present a danger for employees and customers in our communities," said Attorney General Balderas. "This operation is a national model that other states will follow."

Michael Johnston had 11 previous property crime charges in Bernalillo County and several out of the State of New York. His criminal history indicated that he was escalating from misdemeanor thefts to felonies, eventually stealing goods worth thousands of dollars. It is estimated that this defendant has stolen over ten thousand dollars worth of merchandise from retailers such as Walmart, Kohls, and Home Depot. Recognized as a frequent shoplifter, Johnston brazenly committed many of his crimes in broad daylight and in front of store staff. Johnston has repeatedly failed to comply with the conditions of release set in his cases and had acquired over 20 bench warrants, each time halting the judicial process and creating barriers to successful adjudication.

This case was investigated by the Albuquerque Police Department and prosecuted by Assistant Attorney General Ashley Schweizer, as part of an initiative to prosecute high level property and organized retail theft crimes in New Mexico.

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