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**PRESS RELEASE**

December 21, 2011

A Laytonville man is facing a likely state prison sentence of 40 years to life after a Mendocino County jury found him guilty late Tuesday afternoon of second degree murder in connection with the shooting death of his stepson, Colin Champlin.

Rey Bejar Reyes, 52, of Laytonville, was also found guilty of using a firearm to perpetrate Champlin's murder. Jurors heard evidence and then deliberated a combined six days. By law, second degree murder carries a sentence of 15 years to life. The use of a firearm to perpetrate murder carries an additional 25 years to life. Prosecution of Reyes was directed by Deputy District Attorney Elizabeth Norman, while Reyes' defense was handled by Deputy Public Defender Farris Purviance III. District Attorney David Eyster commended the jurors for their service, saying the verdicts as returned are indicative that the jury understood the circumstances and properly applied the law.

Reyes killed Champlin on Dec.1, 2010 at the family home in Laytonville. Champlin, 21, came to live with his mother and step-father in Mendocino County in hopes of getting to better know his mother. On the day of the shooting, Reyes began to stew about exchanges he believed he had heard between the young man and his mother. Admitting that alcohol consumption played a role in the ultimate outcome, the defendant testified at trial that he became increasingly angry that night over what he perceived as inappropriate comments and closeness between the mother and son. Having first isolated himself in a bedroom to think about things, Reyes eventually returned to the living room with a loaded handgun and shot the stepson where he sat on the couch beside his mother, watching computer music videos.

Investigators called to the scene found the victim still sitting on the living room couch, with a fatal gunshot wound to his head. During the trial, Reyes testified he thought his stepson may have been reaching for a gun. But physical evidence presented to jurors contradicted this claim. Victim Champlin had a laptop balanced on his legs, and was holding a lit cigarette in his left fingers and a cigarette pack with his right hand. A handgun was later found tucked into the victim's waistband against the small of his back. Expert testimony presented at the trial concluded that the fatal gunshot caused immediate death, a fact that further supported the prosecutor's argument that where the laptop, the held cigarette and the held cigarette pack were found was strong evidence that the defendant's claim of self-defense was contrived.

James Champlin, the father of the murder victim, came from out-of-state to testify that he spoke with his son every weekend after the son moved to Mendocino County. He said his son was happy, and not having any problems with anybody including Reyes.

Superior Court Judge Richard Henderson scheduled sentencing of Reyes for January 27, 2012 at the Ukiah courthouse.