



JOSÉ R. RODRÍGUEZ
EL PASO COUNTY ATTORNEY
500 EAST SAN ANTONIO
ROOM 503, COUNTY COURTHOUSE
EL PASO, TEXAS 79901

NO. 200747

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday August 14, 2007

Visit the Press Releases Archive at:

<http://www.epcounty/CA/releases.htm>

For More Information Contact:

Elhiu Dominguez

Public Affairs Officer

Phone: (915) 546-2016

Cell: (915) 472-1354

FAX: (915) 546-2133

Elhiu.dominguez@ca.epcounty.com

County Attorney organizes free seminar to help local merchants collect on their hot checks

Dozens of local small business owners and employees are expected to participate in the annual Free Hot Check Seminar, to be held Friday August 24, 2007 at the County Courthouse.

El Paso County Attorney José Rodríguez organizes the yearly seminar to offer easy to understand information to local residents and merchants on how they can take advantage of the free hot check collection service offered by his office.

Many individuals in the community do not know that writing a hot check constitutes the crime of “theft by check” that can be punishable by up to one year in jail and/or a fine of up to \$4,000. More importantly, hot checks hurt El Paso businesses, the local economy and the community by increasing costs that merchants must pass on to consumers in order to offset their losses. Our community also suffers due to the additional cost of law enforcement and prosecution of this white-collar crime. Last fiscal year the County Attorney’s Office received more than 15,000 checks with insufficient funds, and it is trying to collect more than \$ 4 million in outstanding checks.

El Paso County Attorney José R. Rodríguez created the Hot Checks Department to assist local merchants with losses due to bad checks. The primary goal of the unit is to obtain restitution for the victim while educating the public as to how to protect themselves against this crime. Last fiscal year, the unit collected more than \$1.8 million in restitution to local merchants. Despite the fact that many big companies in El Paso take advantage of the program, thousands of small businesses do not, in part, because they do not know the service is available free of charge.

At the event, participants will learn how to submit their checks for collection, how to get faster refunds, and what to do to avoid falling victim of this crime.

WHO: Open to the Public

WHAT: Free Hot Check Seminar

WHEN: Friday August 24th, 2007

TIME: 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**WHERE: Commissioner's Court Auditorium
County Courthouse, Room 303
500 E. San Antonio**

For more information on the seminar, or how to get a free hot check packet by mail, please call the Hot Check Department, at 546-2051.