

OFFICE OF THE  
**DISTRICT ATTORNEY**  
COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

**JOHN T. SAVRNOCH**  
District Attorney



04-838

RELEASE NUMBER

April 16, 2026

RELEASE DATE

Deputy District Attorney Carl Barnes

CONTACT NAME

(805) 568-2363

CONTACT PHONE

\*\*\*\*\* PRESS RELEASE \*\*\*\*\*

**Santa Barbara County District Attorney's Office Responds to Sentencing in Fatal DUI Case**

**Re: *People v. Katelyn Fultz***  
***Santa Barbara Superior Court Case No. 25CR03448***

**SANTA BARBARA, Calif.**, — Santa Barbara County District Attorney John T. Savrnock announced today that, on April 14, 2026, over the objection of the District Attorney's Office, Katelyn Fultz, a 29-year-old resident of Santa Barbara, was sentenced by the Court to five years of probation, with six years of state prison suspended. She had previously pleaded no contest to gross vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated in violation of Penal Code section 191.5(a).

On May 1, 2025, Fultz was driving on Highway 154 when she crossed over double yellow lines, causing a catastrophic collision. The crash left 24-year-old Carley Howard in a coma, ultimately resulting in her death. Howard's passenger, Albert Ineira, sustained injuries including a laceration requiring stitches and a fractured foot.

Toxicology results showed Fultz had a blood alcohol content of 0.167% and the presence of cocaethylene, a compound formed when cocaine and alcohol are used together, at the time of the crash. Fultz was also driving without a valid driver's license.

On March 17, 2026, Fultz entered an open plea before visiting Judge Brian Aronson. Fultz pled no contest to all charges and enhancements without any agreement with the District Attorney's Office. The charges included gross vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated, two counts of DUI causing injury, and multiple great bodily injury enhancements.

At the April 14, 2026 sentencing hearing, the Court heard powerful victim impact statements from Ms. Howard's family and loved ones. The Santa Barbara County District Attorney's Office argued for a state prison sentence of 10 years, 8 months to reflect the devastating loss of life and the egregious nature of the defendant's conduct. The Probation Department recommended 7 years, 8 months in state prison. Despite those recommendations, the Court imposed probation with a suspended prison term and, over the objection of the District Attorney's Office, reduced the DUI causing great bodily injury charge involving Mr. Ineira to a misdemeanor.

Despite those recommendations, the Court imposed a sentence of probation with a suspended prison term and ordered Fultz to serve 270 days in county jail.

District Attorney John T. Savrnock expressed deep disappointment with the judge's sentencing choice: "This sentence is profoundly shocking and does not come close to reflecting the magnitude of the loss suffered by Carley Howard's family. A young woman lost her life because of a series of reckless, illegal, and dangerous decisions by the defendant—driving under the influence of both alcohol and cocaine, at nearly twice the legal limit, without a valid license."

“Our office sought a significant state prison sentence because that is what justice and public safety demand in a case like this. When someone chooses to drive in that condition and takes a life, there must be real consequences.”

“While nothing can undo the harm caused, this appallingly lenient sentence sends the wrong message about the seriousness of impaired driving. We at the District Attorney’s Office remain committed to aggressively prosecuting DUI cases and standing with victims and their families in the pursuit of accountability.”

Fultz was remanded into custody to serve her jail sentence and will return to Department 11 on April 28, 2026, to formalize the terms of her probation.

\* \* \* \* \*