

*Jackie Lacey*  
District Attorney  
<http://da.lacounty.gov>



NEWS RELEASE

**Media Contact:**

Sarah Ardalani  
Public Information Officer  
213-257-2000  
[SArdalani@da.lacounty.gov](mailto:SArdalani@da.lacounty.gov)  
Twitter: @LADAOffice

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## **Long Beach Man Sentenced to Prison for Killing Friend**

A 53-year-old man was sentenced today to 14 years in state prison for fatally stabbing his friend in 2015, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

On March 23, a jury found Phillip Lester Vargas of Long Beach guilty of voluntary manslaughter in case NA101954.

Jurors also found true a special allegation that the defendant personally used a deadly and dangerous weapon, a knife, during the commission of the crime.

Additionally, the defendant admitted that he was previously convicted of second-degree commercial burglary and forgery in 2005 and using tear gas in 2011.

Deputy District Attorney Karen Brako, who prosecuted the case, said on May 30, 2015, Vargas and his friend, Kustanya Buckhalter, 36, got into an argument in the 100 block of Pacific Avenue in Long Beach.

During the altercation, Vargas stabbed Buckhalter, the prosecutor said.

Following the assault, the victim was taken by paramedics to the hospital for medical treatment but ultimately succumbed to his injuries.

The next day, Vargas was arrested in connection with the killing.

The case was investigated by the Long Beach Police Department.

[About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office](#)

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to protecting our community through the fair and ethical pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of crime victims' rights.