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Governor OK's Parole for Battered Woman

By Sonja Bjelland, *The Press-Enterprise*

On Monday, a former Soboba Reservation resident will leave the prison walls behind.

Since 1986, Henrietta Briones has been serving time for a murder conviction in the California Institution for Women near Chino.

She shot her abusive ex-boyfriend and supporters say she has served her time. In April, family and friends rallied outside the prison while the Board of Prison Terms decided for the second time that Briones was fit for parole. Gov. Davis rejected the board's decision in 2002, but Gov. Schwarzenegger's office announced Wednesday that he would not review the board's decision, which ended his ability to reverse that decision.

The prison determined that Briones, 44, has served the minimum of her 17 years to life sentence and will be set free Monday, CIW spokesman Lt. Larry Aaron said.

After months of beatings, Briones left her boyfriend Lawrence Daniels for another man. On Jan. 26, 1986, she went with her boyfriend to Daniels' Compton apartment. Daniels pistol-whipped the new boyfriend and returned hours later, she said in a 1992 interview. Then Daniels began arguing with Briones outside the apartment and he stuck the barrel of a gun in her mouth. She retrieved a .22-caliber rifle out of her apartment and, when Daniels pointed a pistol at her, she shot him once in the heart, she has said.

Briones' family members declined to comment Friday.

The Free Battered Women organization works with woman such as Briones to make these paroles possible. Briones is one of 34 domestic violence survivors who petitioned for clemency in 1992 under Gov. Wilson after a law passed permitting expert testimony in domestic violence cases.

Gov. Schwarzenegger has allowed at least four women to be released because of Battered Woman Syndrome while reversing the board's recommendations on at least six others, said Andrea Bible, project coordinator for the statewide organization.

"We're very excited by the fact that there seems to be a shift in the current governor's office policy," she said by phone. "There's no longer a blanket parole policy."

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