



OFFICE OF THE
DISTRICT ATTORNEY
ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
TODD SPITZER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

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**Man Charged with Felony Animal Cruelty for Strangling and Drowning his
Four-month-old Female Puppy in Bathtub of Cypress Hotel**

*Firefighters discovered dead puppy after being called to hotel room to put out fire
caused by man setting a Bible on fire.*

SANTA ANA, Calif. – A man has been charged with strangling and then drowning his four-month-old puppy in the bathtub of an extended stay hotel in Cypress earlier this week. Firefighters found the dead puppy after they were called to the hotel room to respond to a fire that was caused by the man setting a Bible on fire inside the room.

Richard Benjamin Tolliver, 27, has been charged with one felony count of cruelty to animals. He faces a maximum sentence of three years in state prison and a fine of \$20,000 if convicted.

On May 6, 2024, at around 8:50 a.m., firefighters from the Orange County Fire Authority were called to the Extended Stay America hotel regarding a report of a possible fire in one of the hotel rooms. After using a key card from the manager to enter the room, firefighters found a Bible on fire and a dead four-month-old, female red Golden Retriever in the bathtub.

The occupant of the room, later identified as Richard Tolliver, was transported to Los Alamitos Medical Center and arrested on suspicion of animal cruelty.

Tolliver has pleaded not guilty and remains in custody in lieu of \$5,000 bail.

“The thought of someone strangling a tiny puppy and then holding it under water in a hotel bathroom until it stops breathing is beyond disturbing,” said Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer. “The loyalty and unwavering love of a dog makes the cruelty inflicted on a defenseless animal even more heartbreaking. Violence of any kind against animals will not be tolerated and we will prosecute those who

inflict harm on animals to the fullest extent of the law.”

Deputy District Attorney Michael Chay of the Consumer and Environmental Protection Unit prosecuted this case.

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