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## GOOD WEDNESDAY MORNING



**COOLER:** Partly cloudy and a bit cooler today. Northwest wind to 15 mph. Today's high, 86. Tonight's low, 53. High Thursday, 76. 86.

## STATE

CREDIT WARNING: The nation's major

# Judge clears father in baby's death

By STEVE E. SWENSON  
*Californian staff writer*

Charges of murdering his infant son were dismissed against a Buttonwillow man Tuesday by a Superior Court judge who ruled there wasn't enough evidence even to send the case to a jury.

\_\_\_\_\_ had been charged with snaking to death his 8-month-old son, Michael Allen Bruce, on Aug. 31.

\_\_\_\_\_ wept in relief and hugged his attorney, William J. Routals II of Bakersfield. After spending six months in jail, \_\_\_\_\_ was released Tuesday evening.

Superior Court Judge Gary T. Friedman dismissed the case just before final arguments were to be presented to the jury.

Routals said, "We proved his innocence beyond a doubt. I really feel elated justice was done."

He said after the judge's decision, which he described as "rare" in a murder case, he went outside the courtroom where he

encountered the jurors.

"The women were hugging me, the men were shaking my hand. Some said they would have never convicted."

*I've never felt so much warmth in my life."*

Friedman ruled there was insufficient evidence presented in the two-week trial.

Routals' primary argument was based on expert testimony it would take at least 25 to 30 minutes for the child to die. But the child's mother, Sabrina Bruce, 19, testified \_\_\_\_\_ was with the baby less than 15 minutes before emergency crews arrived and determined the baby was not respond-

ing to revival efforts.

One witness estimated \_\_\_\_\_ could have been with the baby for a half-hour before the emergency crews were called.

Deputy District Attorney Sara O. Ryals argued that jurors should have been allowed to consider the credibility of Bruce and other witnesses in determining whether the murder charge was proved beyond a reasonable doubt.

But Routals replied the prosecution's case included the testimony of Bruce, and her testimony, in conjunction with the medical experts, cleared his client.