



Department of Justice

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**FEDERAL JURY FINDS CHILTON COUNTY MAN GUILTY ON
CHILD MOLESTATION AND CHILD PORNOGRAPHY CHARGES**

MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA— A federal jury found Jerry Alan Penton, age 37, of Clanton, Alabama, guilty of knowingly using child pornography to entice an eight year old child to engage in sexual activity, announced U.S. Attorney Leura G. Canary. After four full days of trial, it took the jury less than two hours today to convict Penton on that and two other child pornography-related counts.

The jury's verdict is the culmination of a year-long investigation by agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation into the child's initial outcry, as well as an allegation of abuse by another child, age six. Ultimately, agents took custody of nine computers from Penton's home, along with CDs and other electronic storage media. A forensic examination by the FBI's Computer Analysis and Response Team Laboratory revealed thousands of images and movies containing child pornography and child erotica spread over three computers and two CDs. The FBI, in cooperation with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, was able to determine that many of the children depicted in the photographs were known child victims in several other states and countries.

According to the Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section of the U.S. Department of Justice, this is the first case to be tried to conviction under Title 18, United States Code, Section 2252A(a)(6), a part of the recently enacted Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006

that specifically targets use of child pornography to break down a child's defenses to illegal sexual contact.

Sentencing in the case has been set for March 5, 2009. Penton faces a maximum of 50 years in prison, a \$250,000 fine, and the remainder of his life on supervised release.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood. In May 2006, the U.S. Department of Justice launched Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse. Led by United States Attorneys' Offices and the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS), Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as to identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafechildhood.gov/.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigations and the prosecution was aided by the participation of the Child Protect Children's Advocacy Center of Montgomery. Special thanks are extended to Calera Police Officer John Shearon, who initially investigated the state molestation charges and provided valuable testimony during the trial. The trial was presided over by the Honorable W. Keith Watkins, United States District Court Judge for the Middle District of Alabama. Assistant United States Attorneys Christopher A. Snyder and Nathan D. Stump prosecuted the case.