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**RUSTON BUSINESSMAN SENTENCED TO PRISON FOR
FAILING TO FILE TAX RETURNS AND IMPEDING THE IRS**

SHREVEPORT, La. - United States Attorney Stephanie A. Finley announced that Randy L. Branch, age 53, of Ruston, Louisiana, was sentenced today to 18 months imprisonment for the felony offense of Impeding the Internal Revenue Service and 12 months imprisonment for Failing to File a Tax Return. These sentences will run concurrent. After his release from prison, Branch will serve a 12 month term of supervised release.

Branch, the owner and operator of a construction business in Ruston, La., was charged in April 2010 in a 33-count indictment with failure to file tax returns for the years 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006, obstructing and impeding the IRS, and structuring financial transactions. Testimony during his guilty plea proceeding was that Branch handled all of his financial transactions in cash in order to avoid the usual records. Branch would cash almost all business checks and pay the majority of his expenses in cash or cashier's checks.

United States Attorney Stephanie Finley stated, "Branch's criminal activity spanned years and involved thousands of dollars of unreported income. This case should send a message to anyone who thinks that they can get around the tax laws that we will be vigilant in our investigation and prosecution of cases like this. Honest citizens in this district should not have to foot the bill for defendants like this. No one is above the law."

"IRS-CI is aggressive in their investigations involving those who attempt to defraud our nation's tax system," said Jim Lee, Special Agent in Charge of IRS Criminal Investigation, New Orleans Field Office. "Randy Branch will now pay the consequence of his willful failure to file tax returns."

This case was investigated by the United States Department of Treasury, Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation, and was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Robert W. Gillespie, Jr.

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