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TAX ADVISER SENTENCED TO 6+ YEARS FOR PREPARING FRAUDULENT TAX RETURNS

KANSAS CITY, KAN. – The former tax director of Topeka-based Renaissance, The Tax People, Inc., has been sentenced to 78 months in federal prison for tax fraud, U.S. Attorney Lanny Welch said today. He also was ordered to pay more than \$3 million in restitution and barred from preparing tax returns.

Daniel Joel Gleason, 61, Franklin, Tenn., pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to defraud the Internal Revenue Service and to defraud Renaissance members through mail and wire fraud, and one count of preparing a fraudulent federal income tax return.

In his plea, Gleason admitted that in March 1998 he signed a contract to work with Renaissance to provide tax advice to the company's members, and to represent them before the IRS in defending their tax returns. Gleason admitted assisting in the preparation of 56 false income tax returns including a 1999 Form 1040 joint income tax return for a couple that falsely claimed losses of \$13,914 and resulted in a tax loss of \$3,176. Fraudulent income tax returns that Gleason prepared either falsely inflated or falsely created business deductions for personal living expenses.

Other defendants in the case include:

- **Michael Craig Cooper**, who is awaiting sentencing.
- **Todd Eugene Strand**, who was sentenced to 51 months.
- **Thomas W. Steelman**, who was sentenced to 46 months.
- **Jesse Ayala Cota**, who was sentenced to 24 months.
- **Frances Ruth**, who was sentenced to 2 years probation.
- **Alexander Anthony Federico**, who was sentenced to 2 years probation.
- **Elizabeth Crotts**, who was sentenced to 2 years probation.

Welch commended the Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation, and the United States Postal Inspection Service with assistance from the Kansas Attorney General's Office for their investigation of the case. He also commended the prosecutors in the case including Assistant U.S. Attorney Scott Rask and Department of Justice Tax Division Attorneys Charles A. O'Reilly and Lea A. Carlisle.