



# Department of Justice

United States Attorney Leura G. Canary  
Middle District of Alabama

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CONTACT: Retta Goss

Telephone (334) 223-7280

Fax (334) 223-7560

Cell (334) 546-1930

## **CHILD MOLESTER NETS 40-YEAR SENTENCE UNDER NEW FEDERAL ANTI-GROOMING LAW**

**MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA**— In a first-of-its-kind case, Chilton County resident, Jerry Alan Penton, age 37, was sentenced today to 480 months in federal prison under a new federal law that targets the use of child pornography to break down a child's defenses to illegal sexual contact – a practice commonly known as grooming.

The sentence is the culmination of a multi-year investigation by agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation into allegations that Penton sexually abused two children, ages 6 and 8. 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 National Center for Missing and Exploited Children was able to identify many of the children depicted in the illicit images as known child victims from other states and countries.

A federal jury sitting in Montgomery found Penton guilty on all counts back on December 12, 2008, after four full days of trial. According to the Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section of the U.S. Department of Justice, this was the first case to be tried to conviction under Title 18, United States Code, Section 2252A(a)(6), which is the anti-grooming provision of the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006. Penton was also charged

and convicted of knowingly distributing and possessing thousands of images of child pornography over a period of several years.

In handing down the sentence, the Honorable W. Keith Watkins, United States District Judge for the Middle District of Alabama, found that Penton had engaged in a pattern of activity involving the sexual exploitation of minors, that he had knowingly distributed child pornography to a minor as an aid to illegal sexual activity, that his victims were particularly vulnerable, and that the images Penton possessed included sadomasochistic depictions of young children. Judge Watkins also noted that Penton had not yet demonstrated any repentance for his crimes.

The judge also took into account statements from several of the child victims depicted in images found on Penton's computer. According to one such victim, now 19, the feeling of continuous exploitation on the internet is terrifying: "When I was told how many people have viewed these images and videos I thought my pulse would stop. Thinking about all those sick perverts viewing my body being ravished and hurt like that makes me feel like I was raped by each and every one of them."

As part of his sentence, upon his release from prison, Penton will spend the remainder of his life on supervised release, with tight restrictions on his ability to use a computer or to have contact with anyone under the age of 18.

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/](http://www.projectsafechildhood.gov/).

Assistant United States Attorneys Christopher A. Snyder and Nathan D. Stump prosecuted the case.