



Department of Justice

United States Attorney Robert E. O'Neill
Middle District of Florida

Tampa

Orlando

Jacksonville

Ocala

Fort Myers

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 5, 2011

<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/flm/pr>

CONTACT: AMY FILJONES

PHONE: (813) 274-6171

FAX: (813) 274-6300

ST. AUGUSTINE MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO FEDERAL CHARGE OF FAILURE TO REGISTER AS SEX OFFENDER

Jacksonville, FL - United States Attorney Robert E. O'Neill announced today that Michael Bruce Bennett (age 52, of St. Augustine) has pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court in Jacksonville to a federal charge of failure to register as sex offender in the state of Florida after traveling from the state of Washington. Bennett faces up to 10 years in federal prison and a \$250,000 fine. Bennett was arrested on this charge on November 5, 2010 in St. Augustine, and has been in custody since that date. A sentencing date has not yet been set.

According to court documents, in 1989, Bennett was charged with committing a sex offense against a child in the state of Texas. On November 16, 1990, Bennett pled guilty to this offense and was sentenced to a term of imprisonment of 4 years in the Texas State Penitentiary. After his release from prison, Texas authorities advised Bennett that he would have a lifetime duty to register as a sex offender with an annual verification requirement. At the time of the incident, Bennett was living in Fort Bend, Texas.

In 2009, officials in the state of Washington discovered that Bennett was living in Vancouver, Washington and had not registered as a sex offender. Bennett was contacted and given official notice that he was required to report to the Clark County Sheriff's Office

to register. On November 4, 2009, Bennett reported as instructed and registered as a sex offender, and he was advised of his obligations to update his registration if he moved to another state.

Subsequently, officials in the state of Washington determined that Bennett had left the state in January 2010. Bennett had failed to provide any notice to authorities that he intended to leave the state as required by federal and state law. Bennett traveled from the state of Washington to the state of Florida and established residence in St. Johns County. After further investigation, deputies with the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office and the United States Marshals Service located and arrested Bennett at a residence in St. Augustine on November 5, 2010. Records checks confirmed that Bennett had never registered in the state of Florida as a sex offender.

After establishing residence in Florida in or about April 2010, Bennett was required to register and keep his registration current with the State of Florida under the federal Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act ("SORNA"), because Bennett is a sex offender under SORNA. Further, Bennett failed to register as a sex offender with the state of Florida prior to his arrest on November 5, 2010, which was more than 10 days after he had established residence in the state of Florida.

This case was investigated by the United States Marshals Service, the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office, and the Clark County (Washington) Sheriff's Office. It is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney D. Rodney Brown.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice 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.