



## ELLIS COUNTY & DISTRICT ATTORNEY

M. ANN MONTGOMERY

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DATE: August 19, 2022

### **Jury Sentences Man to 20 Years for Promotion of Child Pornography**

Ellis County and District Attorney Ann Montgomery announced that Jon Russell Whitson, 39, of Waxahachie, Texas, was convicted and sentenced to the maximum sentence of twenty years in prison for promotion of child pornography. Whitson was also convicted of ten counts of Possession of Child Pornography. Promotion of child pornography is a second-degree felony punishable by two to twenty years in prison and possession of child pornography is punishable by two years to ten years in prison.

On August 15, 2022, Whitson pleaded guilty to a jury of one count of promotion of child pornography and ten counts of possession of child pornography. The jury heard evidence in punishment that on May 5, 2020, Instagram flagged Whitson's account and sent a cybertip to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children regarding an image of child pornography and a video that Whitson shared on the social media network. The Waxahachie Police Department received information regarding the cybertip a few weeks later and started an investigation. Instagram disabled the initial account but Whitson created a new one within a month. The Waxahachie Police Department served a search warrant on Whitson's residence on August 18, 2020, where investigators seized his phone for subsequent forensic testing.

The Department of Homeland Security Investigations Division conducted the data extraction of Whitson's phone. Whitson had several images and videos of sexual abuse of children. Only a few of the videos and images were shown to the jury due to their graphic nature.

The Honorable Justice David Evans, visiting judge of the 443<sup>rd</sup> Judicial District Court, presided over the case and after receiving the jury's punishment verdict, pronounced the sentence on August 19, 2022. The jury recommended both prison and community supervision sentences for the eleven available counts. Justice Evans determined that Whitson would serve the twenty-year sentence first followed by an additional 2-year sentence assessed by the jury. After Whitson is released from prison, he will be placed on community supervision to serve out the rest of his sentence. Whitson will be required to register as a sex offender for the rest of his life.

"Each image of child sexual abuse represents a real child who was victimized. This child continues to be victimized every time an offender downloads, possesses, and trades these horrendous and vile images. My office will protect our children by prosecuting those who would promote or profit from this trade," Montgomery stated.

Assistant County and District Attorneys Sherry Roeder and Marina Thomas prosecuted the cases, assisted by County and District Attorney Investigator Joe Aguilar. The case was investigated by the Waxahachie Police Department lead detective Elizabeth Glidewell. The Ellis County and District Attorney's Office would like to thank the United States Department of Homeland Security - Investigations Division for additional assistance.