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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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JURY SENTENCES FUGITIVE TO 20 YEARS FOR DOMESTIC ABUSE

Leonard Allen Hennard, 43 years old, of Red Oak, Texas, was found guilty by an Ellis County Jury on Wednesday, August 27, 2014, of Assault Against a Family Member With Previous Conviction and Assault Against a Family Member by Occlusion. Under Texas law, it is a felony to commit an assault against a family member after a previous conviction for an offense involving family violence. Additionally, it is a felony to assault a family member by occlusion, which is impeding the breath or blood of a person by applying pressure to the neck or covering the mouth or nose, a technical name for choking and suffocating.

The evidence showed that on April 1, 2013, Hennard got into an argument with his sister over Hennard trying to sell a watch for drugs. The argument escalated to the point that Hennard choked his sister, hit her in the head, stomped on her arm, and threw her against the wall. During police questioning, Hennard admitted to pushing his sister a little harder than he should have, but minimized the incident. The jury saw photographs of the victim's neck and a boot print on her arm.

After Hennard was arrested, the victim filed an affidavit of non-prosecution to try to have the case dismissed. This is common in domestic violence situations and prosecutor Habon Mohamed with the Ellis County District Attorney's Office chose to proceed with the case. The district attorney's office takes domestic violence seriously. This office will prosecute these cases if justified by the facts, even if the victim requests the charges be dismissed. Experience has shown domestic violence tends to escalate and steps should be taken to discourage further family violence. An affidavit of non-prosecution, as in this case, is often the result of pressure by the defendant or other family members to get the victim to drop the charge.

Hennard left the Ellis County Courthouse when the jury started to deliberate his case, and did not return. Defendant's bond was forfeited and a warrant issued for his arrest. After the jury reached a verdict, Judge Bob Carroll waited approximately 2 hours for the defendant to re-appear

in the 40th District Court. When Leonard Hennard did not appear, Judge Carroll called in the jury and accepted the verdict of guilty.

The punishment hearing was held on August 28, 2014, and proceeded without Hennard being present. Red Oak Police Sergeant Gary Dollar testified that he had gone to Leonard Hennard's residence in Red Oak in an attempt to locate him, but Hennard could not be found. Hennard had a previous conviction for Aggravated Robbery that enhanced the crime to a 2nd degree felony.

The jury assessed the maximum punishment of 20 years imprisonment for each count and a \$10,000.00 fine. By law, those sentences must be served concurrently.

County & District Attorney Patrick Wilson made the following statement: "Leonard Hennard is obviously a violent and dangerous criminal who represents a threat to the safety of our community. My office is requesting the assistance of the media and the public in locating Hennard so that he can be transferred to the Institution Division of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and serve his sentence."

[Photograph on next page]

