



Department of Justice

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Western District of Kentucky

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TWO WESTERN KENTUCKY DRUG DEALERS RECEIVE LIFE SENTENCES

-Meth had a street value of \$750,000
-Received statutory required life sentence

OWENSBORO, KY - John E. Stewart, age 35, of 1961 State Route 189 in Greenville, Kentucky, and Robert C. Wettstain, age 34, of 123 Duff Lane in Beaver Dam, Kentucky, were both sentenced to life imprisonment in United States District Court, Owensboro, Kentucky, for drug trafficking, U.S. Attorney David L. Huber of the Western District of Kentucky and Paul Vido, Special Agent in Charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Louisville Field Division, jointly announced today.

Joseph H. McKinley, Jr., Judge, United States District Court, also sentenced Stewart and Wettstain to 10 years supervised release following incarceration. There is no parole in the federal judicial system.

Noting Stewart's three prior drug felony convictions and Wettstain's two prior drug felony convictions, U.S. Attorney Huber praised the Audubon Area Gun Task Force and the Davies County Sheriff's Office for "taking these long-time drug dealers out of the Henderson and Daviess County communities."

Stewart and Wettstain were found guilty by a jury following a three-day trial in December 2007. Stewart and Wettstain were tried for conspiring with each other, and two other co-defendants, Wesley Higdon and Jerry Richardson, for over two years in the distribution of methamphetamine with a street value of approximately \$750,000. Higdon, age 28, of Philpot,

Kentucky, pled guilty to the charges on September 27, 2007, and was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment on January 31, 2008. Richardson, age 28, also of Philpot, Kentucky, pled guilty on December 13, 2007, and was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment on March 6, 2008.

The four men conspired with each other to distribute crystal methamphetamine. Evidence at trial showed that Stewart was at the top of the pyramid and that he was the source for Wettstain, Richardson and Higdon to purchase crystal methamphetamine which they would, in turn, distribute to low-level users throughout Owensboro, Henderson and Daviess Counties.

Stewart has three prior convictions, all in Daviess County Circuit Court:

- 1) A conviction for Possession of a Controlled Substance in the First Degree and Possession of Drug Paraphernalia Subsequent Offense entered on October 6, 2000, criminal case number: 99-CR-00256;
- 2) A conviction for Possession of a Controlled Substance, First Degree, entered on September 12, 2000, criminal case number: 00-CR-00151, and
- 3) A conviction for Possession of a Controlled Substance in the First Degree, Subsequent Offense and Promoting Contraband in the First Degree entered on September 14, 2001, criminal case number: 01-CR-00149

Wettstain's prior convictions, also in Daviess County Circuit Court, include:

- 1) A conviction for Criminal Facilitation to Manufacture Methamphetamine, entered on November 10, 2004, criminal case number: 03-CR-573, and
- 2) A conviction for Possession of a Controlled Substance in the First Degree, entered on December 10, 1999, criminal case number: 99-CR-352

The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Robert J. Kilmartin and it was investigated by ATF and the Audubon Area Gun Task Force (AAGTF), including the Daviess County Sheriff's Office.

This is a **Project Backfire** prosecution. **Project Backfire** is a partnership of state, local and federal law enforcement which targets violent offenders for prosecution to the fullest extent

of state and federal law.

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