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Press Release

For Immediate Release

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Man Sentenced to 28 Years for Felon in Possession of a Firearm

GALVESTON – Today, Michael Belle, 52, was sentenced to 28 years in the Institutional Division of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, as assessed by the jury, for the felony offense of Unlawful Possession of a Firearm by a Felon.

On Monday, March 7, 2016, trial began in the 405th District Court. The State presented witness testimony and physical evidence that Michael Belle possessed a firearm on December 31, 2014 and that he was a convicted felon at the time.

Around 8:00 p.m. on December 31, 2014 in Dickinson, officers were on patrol and saw Belle walking. The officer stopped and detained Belle because the officer knew that Belle had an active parole board warrant. After the warrant was confirmed to still be active, Belle was arrested. During a pat down, officers found a loaded gun in Belle's inside jacket pocket.

The jury heard closing arguments on Tuesday afternoon and after a short deliberation, returned with a guilty verdict. Punishment began on Tuesday afternoon and concluded this morning. Belle faced a punishment range of 25 years to Life in prison because of two felony enhancements.

During punishment, Belle pled true to the two enhancements, a 1988 conviction for burglary of a habitation in Washington County, Texas and a 1997 conviction for aggravated assault in Brazoria County, Texas. The State also submitted evidence that Belle had two additional felony convictions, both in 2001 in Bee County, Texas. The additional convictions were for aggravated assault and for possession of a deadly weapon in a penal institution.

After another short deliberation, the jury returned with a punishment verdict of 28 years confinement. Belle will not be eligible for parole until at least one-fourth of his sentence is served.

Belle was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorneys Matthew Heermans and Matthew Shawhan in the 405th District Court, with Judge Michelle Slaughter presiding. The investigation was conducted by the Dickinson Police Department.

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