



TANEY COUNTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DATE: AUGUST 10, 2009

**GERALD WILLINGHAM FOUND GUILTY OF POSSESSION OF A CONTROLLED
SUBSTANCE**

FORSYTH, MO - Taney County Prosecuting Attorney, Jeffrey M. Merrell announced today that GERALD WILLINGHAM, dob: 11-11-1967 was found guilty Friday by Taney County Circuit Judge Mark Orr of the class C felony of possession of a controlled substance as a prior and persistent felony offender. The two day bench trial of GERALD WILLINGHAM was heard in Christian County on a change of venue. Formal sentencing in the matter is set for November 13, 2009 at 1:00pm in Christian County.

On December 12, 2004, at approximately 1950 hours a trooper with the Missouri State Highway Patrol initiated a traffic stop of a green Ford Explorer on Strawberry Road for lacking a light illuminating the rear license plate. During the traffic stop, the trooper asked the driver of the vehicle GERALD WILLINGHAM to exit his vehicle. GERALD WILLINGHAM was asked by the trooper if he had anything in his pockets. In response to this question, GERALD WILLINGHAM turned from the officer and started emptying his pockets on the hood of the patrol vehicle. While he was emptying his pockets he tried to discard an item onto the ground. The item, a baggie containing a white powder, was recovered by the trooper. That baggie was later sent to the Missouri State Highway Patrol Crime laboratory where it tested positive for the presence of methamphetamine, a schedule II controlled substance.

The class C felony of possession of a controlled substance has a range of punishment of one (1) day to one (1) year in the county jail, or one (1) year to seven (7) years in the Missouri Department of Corrections and/or a fine not to exceed \$5,000. Because GERALD WILLINGHAM was found to be a prior and persistent felony offender by the court, he faces an enhanced range of punishment not to exceed fifteen years (15) in the Missouri Department of Corrections.

For more information please visit www.taneycountyprosecutor.com

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