



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

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**AUSTIN MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO NEW FEDERAL CHILD PORNOGRAPHY
CHARGE**

United States Attorney Johnny Sutton announced that Robert Lee Lawless, age 63, of Austin, Texas, pleaded guilty today in federal court in Austin to one count of possession of child pornography. As a result of his guilty plea, Lawless faces a maximum punishment of 20 years in federal prison and a fine of \$250,000. Sentencing for Lawless has not yet been scheduled.

In May of this year, ICE agents obtained a federal search warrant for Lawless's residence in Austin. Agents seized a computer and several computer storage media that belonged to Lawless, which, upon forensic analysis, were found to contain numerous still images of child pornography in digital format. The images depicted children ranging in age from young infants and toddlers to early teens engaging in sexually explicit conduct. Some of the images depicted the sexual exploitation of children involving violence, bondage, and sadomasochistic activities.

Lawless has been convicted once before of a child pornography crime. In 1993, he was convicted in federal court in Austin of Receipt of Child Pornography, a federal felony offense. Because of this prior conviction, Lawless now faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years in federal prison.

This Project Safe Childhood case was investigated by Immigration and Customs Enforcement and prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Matthew Devlin.

Project Safe Childhood (PSC) aims to combat the proliferation of technology-facilitated sexual exploitation crimes against children. The threat of sexual predators soliciting children for physical sexual contact is well-known and serious; the danger of the production, distribution, and possession of child pornography is equally dramatic and disturbing. The response to these growing problems must be coordinated, comprehensive, and robust. It must aim to investigate and prosecute vigorously, and protect and assist victimized children. At the same time, it must recognize the need for a broad, community-based effort to protect our children and to guarantee to future generations the opportunities of the American dream.

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