

State of South Carolina
Solicitor, Thirteenth Judicial Circuit

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Solicitor
W. Walter Wilkins

PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

March 22, 2012

**Pickens Man Sentenced on Committing a Lewd Act Upon Child Under 16 (June 4, 1996)
(2 counts)**

Thirteenth Circuit Solicitor Walt Wilkins states that THOMAS EDWARD JENNINGS, age 72, pled guilty on March 22, 2012 to two counts of Committing a Lewd Act Upon Child Under 16 (June 4, 1996). Mr. Jennings was previously convicted on these same charges by a Pickens County jury on December 17, 2009 and received an eight year and nine month sentence followed by three years of probation. However, the South Carolina Supreme Court reversed the Defendant's previous conviction on September 19, 2011, based on an evidentiary issue and remanded for retrial. Mr. Jennings had served 678 days in the South Carolina Department of Corrections before being released after his conviction was reversed. Since the offenses occurred under the old law, the Defendant would have only had to serve one-quarter of that sentence before he would have been eligible for parole. As a result, Mr. Jennings was resentenced to time served following his March 22nd guilty plea.

Evidence presented at the plea hearing by Assistant Solicitor Jenny Barwick established that between June 14, 2005 and June 14, 2006, Mr. Jennings willfully and inappropriately touched two children between the ages of five and nine years old on their front private areas, chest area, buttocks and back area. As a result of his conviction, Mr. Jennings will be placed on the sex offender registry and required to wear a GPS monitoring system for the remainder of his life.