



## ELLIS COUNTY & DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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### **JEWELRY THIEF SENTENCED TO 20 YEARS IN PRISON**

On July 24, 2018, Michael Kennedy Louis, 54, of Lancaster, Texas was found guilty by an Ellis County jury of Theft of Property. The jury deliberated for only thirty minutes before returning with the guilty verdict. The same jury sentenced Louis to 20 years in prison.

On August 31, 2015, Louis went to Wiley's Diamonds and Fine Jewelry in Waxahachie, Texas and stole a diamond multi-stone engagement ring. Louis had called the store earlier that day and explained that he would be in later to look for a gift for his ill wife. Later that day, a vehicle arrived and backed in to a parking spot on the far side of the building, away from view of the entrance to the store. Louis exited as the passenger and entered the business with a limp. He introduced himself with a false name, Joe Williams. He explained to the sales woman that he had cataracts and would need to look at the jewelry up close to his face. Louis was then captured on surveillance video as he distracted the sales woman and concealed the ring in his mouth. Louis then exited the store in a hurried manner; his limp no longer existing. The ring was worth \$2,500. Louis' true identity was later discovered after a CBS news story aired that sought information on his whereabouts in relation to other thefts committed in Fort Worth, Texas.

During the punishment phase of the trial, Sergeant Jonathan Rhoades, from the Fort Worth police department, told the jury about how he had investigated Louis for similar thefts in Fort Worth, Texas during the same time period. In those cases, Louis also called the store before his arrival, had an exaggerated limp, and gave a false story about having cataracts and an ill wife. It was believed he did these actions in an attempt to gain the trust and sympathy of the sales women. While Sergeant Rhoades was investigating the Fort Worth cases, he learned that Louis had committed the same offenses across the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex and surrounding counties. Prosecutor Habon Mohamed also presented evidence of Louis' twenty-four (24) previous convictions for theft related offenses. The majority of these offenses involved thefts of jewelry.

Prosecutor Nicole Dempsey asked the jury to take into account that Louis was targeting family-owned small jewelry businesses, as well as his lengthy criminal history when determining the appropriate punishment. The jury assessed a \$10,000 fine and 20 years in prison, which is the

maximum punishment allowed for this offense. Judge Gene Knize ruled that the sentence would run consecutively with a seven (7) year sentence Louis received for a jewelry theft in Henderson County.

