

State of South Carolina  
Solicitor, Thirteenth Judicial Circuit

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Solicitor  
W. Walter Wilkins

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**For Immediate Release**

**September 12, 2012**

**Greenville Man Sentenced To Life Without Parole**

Thirteenth Circuit Solicitor Walt Wilkins states that EUGENE THOMAS, age 51, was convicted on September 11, 2012 by a Greenville County jury of Attempted Armed Robbery, and sentenced to Life without the possibility of parole in the South Carolina Department of Corrections by the Honorable R. Markley Dennis, Jr.. The jury also convicted EUGENE THOMAS of Burglary 3<sup>rd</sup> degree and Possession of a Weapon during the Commission of a Violent Crime. He received 5 years concurrent on each of those charges. The defendant, EUGENE THOMAS was sentenced to Life without Parole under the Code of Laws 17-25-45 (commonly referred to as the Two Strike or Three Strike Law) which mandates that a defendant, if convicted of a Most Serious Crime be sentenced to Life without Parole if the defendant has previously been convicted of a Most Serious Crime. The crime of Attempted Armed Robbery is classified in South Carolina as a Most Serious offense and the defendant had been previously convicted of Murder 2<sup>nd</sup> degree (also a Most Serious Offense) in Florida in 1981. The defendant will not be eligible for early release.

Evidence presented at trial by Assistant Solicitor Jennifer Tessitore established that on July 22, 2009, at approximately 3:30 p.m., the defendant entered an apartment located on Forest Street in the city limits of Greenville where the 38 year old victim was cleaning up after having painted a nearby apartment. The defendant pointed a black handgun at the victim, told him to get down on the ground face down and rummaged through the victim's wallet. The defendant then fled the scene. The victim immediately called 911 and was able to give a description of the defendant to the police. Forensic

evidence collected at the scene revealed the defendant's fingerprint on the inside of the apartment door. When the defendant was arrested, he was in possession of a black semi-automatic handgun. The crime was investigated by the Greenville City Police Department.

Solicitor Wilkins stated "Through the cooperative efforts of the Greenville City Police Department, The Department of Public Safety and my office, we were able to convict this career criminal and get him the sentence he deserved." Not only did he have the prior conviction of 2<sup>nd</sup> degree Murder in 1981, he has been convicted in Florida of Felon in Possession of a Pistol in 1998, Possession of Cocaine in 1989, Sale of Cocaine 1990; in Georgia he has been convicted of Resisting Arrest and Possession of Drugs in 1998 and in South Carolina of Possession of Crack Cocaine in 1996 and Criminal Domestic Violence in 2004 and Possession of Ecstasy in 2007.