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**HINDS COUNTY
DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
ROBERT SHULER SMITH, D.A.**

PRESS RELEASE

Byram Bank Robber Raphael Bennett Sentenced in Hinds County

March 5, 2015

For Immediate Release

(Jackson, Miss) Hinds County District Attorney Robert Shuler Smith announced today that Raphael Bennett of Jackson, MS was sentenced on two counts of Armed Robbery after pleading guilty last week. Bennett was sentenced to thirty (30) years, with five (5) years suspended, leaving twenty-five(25) years to serve. Armed Robbery carries a day for day sentence. District Attorney Smith stated the Defendant refused any plea offers by the State and was set for trial on April 6, 2015 after eluding court summons over the past few years.

Bennett was indicted along with two co-defendants for the August 2011 Armed Robbery of the Copiah Bank located in Byram, MS. Bennett and a co-defendant went to the Copiah Bank, while yielding a knife demanded two tellers give them the money. Bennett and his co-defendant wore reflective vests, dust masks, and scarves around their mouths. After fleeing the bank with the money, Bennett swapped vehicles on the frontage road with another co-defendant and exited onto I-55 south at a high rate of speed.

Byram Police Department detained the co-defendant, in the vehicle used during the armed robbery, and pursued Bennett, who was driving a black BMW at speeds in excess of 100mph.

During the attempt to flee authorities, Bennett wrecked the car in a field just south of Wynndale Road exit. Bennett and the co-defendant ran into the woods in an attempt to evade police. The co-defendant was apprehended in the woods and arrested. Bennett was later apprehended and arrested on these charges.

Smith concluded, "The Byram Police Department did an outstanding job in every area of this case and should be applauded for their outstanding efforts. Their hard work has helped remove a dangerous criminal from the streets." Smith stated that he hopes "these convictions and tough sentence will continue to send a message that violent criminals who prey on citizens of Hinds County will be held accountable for their crimes. "