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An Austin County jury convicted Terry Ward, 43, of Failure to Comply with Sex Offender Registration Requirements in Judge Steinhauser's 155th Judicial District Court on May 3, 2017.

Evidence concluded Tuesday around 2:30 p.m., and the jury delivered the guilty verdict the next day after more than 8 hours of deliberation.

Ward elected to have the jury assess punishment. After punishment evidence was presented, the jury deliberated about 25 minutes before giving him 99 years in prison on May 4.

Under Texas law, Ward must serve at least 15 years of his sentence before he is eligible for parole.

First Assistant District Attorney Brandy Robinson prosecuted Ward with help from ADA Ben Nystrom and Legal Assistant Lisa Tobola.

Robinson presented testimony from Deputy Damon Hagen and Deputy Rueben Leal that Ward had been registering as a sex offender in Bellville, Texas but had moved from the location where he was registered. Deputy Hagen obtained an arrest warrant, and he and Attorney General Investigator Matt Kozielski found Ward staying at a residence on San Felipe Road outside Sealy.

Bellville attorney John Harle represented Ward and presented witnesses who stated Ward had never left the Bellville address.

ADA Robinson was pleased with the verdict. "The jury clearly took time to ensure they were reaching the right decision on Ward's guilt. Once they learned his background in punishment, I believe their fast verdict and lengthy sentence showed they felt confident he would be a danger to society if he were released."

Failure to Comply with Sex Offender Registration Requirements typically has a 2 to 10 year punishment range, but Ward's sentencing range was increased to 25 to 99 years or Life because of his many prior convictions. Robinson presented evidence that Ward had been convicted of 6 prior serious felonies and served three previous sentences in the penitentiary.

District Attorney Travis Koehn stated. "Once a sex offender is released from prison, he is required to register his address. This law protects the entire community. I'm proud of the hard work the officers did in this case to verify Ward was not registering as required and track him down."

"The jury's verdict sends a message that you can't hide from justice in Austin County," Koehn added.