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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **PHARMACY ROBBER SENTENCED TO 96 MONTHS**

The Office of the United States Attorney for the District of Vermont stated that Stephen J. Thompson, 38, of Burlington, was sentenced today to 96 months in prison for robbing two area pharmacies in mid-2006.

On May 21, 2006, Thompson robbed the Rite Aid pharmacy on North Avenue in Burlington. On June 3, 2006, he robbed McGregor's pharmacy in South Hero. He committed both robberies during business hours, using what appeared to be a semi-automatic pistol (but was in fact a BB gun) to threaten pharmacists and steal Oxycontin and other opiate based prescription drugs. Thompson pleaded guilty to the Rite Aid robbery and admitted for purposes of sentencing that he committed the McGregor's robbery.

At sentencing today before United States District Court Judge William K. Sessions, III, Thompson requested a reduced sentence based upon his opiate addiction, which he contended resulted from pain caused by a 2001 farm injury. He urged that prior to the 2001 injury he had rehabilitated himself in the wake of several 1990's felonies.

Judge Sessions declined to impose a reduced sentence, and instead made an "upward departure" from the otherwise applicable federal sentencing range based upon the second robbery. Judge Sessions stated that the offenses were very serious and that a clear message of accountability was needed. He imposed a sentence at the high-end of the elevated Sentencing Guideline range: 96 months, followed by a supervised release term of three years. Thompson has been in custody since his arrest in June, 2006.

"Individuals that decide to rob drug stores at gun point to feed their drug addiction should understand that they will face federal prosecution and substantial jail time," stated United States Attorney Thomas D. Anderson.

The robberies were investigated by the Burlington Police Department, the Vermont State Police, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. Thompson was represented by attorney Lisa Shelkrot of Burlington. The United States was represented by Assistant United States Attorney William Darrow.