

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA  
SHREVEPORT DIVISION

GREGORY JAMES BLEDSOE,	)	
	)	CIVIL ACTION NO. 5:21-cv-04367
Plaintiff,	)	
	)	
v.	)	District Judge:
	)	
DEAN WILLIS, DAVID MCCLURE,	)	
BRITTANY B. ARVIE, and JAMES E.	)	Magistrate Judge:
STEWART, SR., individually and in his	)	
official capacity as District Attorney of	)	
Caddo Parish;	)	<b>JURY TRIAL DEMANDED</b>
	)	
Defendants.	)	

**COMPLAINT**

Plaintiff Gregory James Bledsoe files this Complaint pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983. He seeks to recover for violations of his rights under the United States Constitution and pursuant to Louisiana state law. Mr. Bledsoe brings this action against the following Defendants: Sergeant Dean Willis and Officer David McClure, of the Shreveport Police Department; Brittany B. Arvie, an assistant district attorney in the Caddo Parish District Attorney’s Office (“CPDAO”); and James E. Stewart, Sr., individually and in his official capacity as the Caddo Parish District Attorney. Mr. Bledsoe seeks damages and declaratory relief. He alleges as follows:

**I. NATURE OF THE ACTION**

1. This case arises out of the wrongful arrest and detention of Mr. Bledsoe, a now 64-year-old man who has lived in Shreveport, Louisiana since 1996. Until the arrest and detention of Mr. Bledsoe in 2015, he was steadily employed. He had various jobs, including as an independent contractor who worked on home remodels, a plumber for local businesses, a cabinet maker for the Caddo Parish School Board, and, as relevant here, a handyman for a local Shreveport property

management company: Port City Realty. At the time of the incident in question, Mr. Bledsoe also lived in a rental home managed by Port City Realty; his girlfriend and children lived with him.

2. During the timeframe in question, Mr. Bledsoe was an independent contractor for Port City Realty. At some point between August 4 and August 7, 2015, he was contracted by Port City Realty to repair a broken glass window in a door at 267 Dalzell Street, Shreveport, Louisiana (“the Dalzell Street Property”).

3. Months later, due to a blatantly deficient police investigation, he was arrested for felony burglary of the home at which he had performed the repair. Thereafter, because he refused to cop a plea to a crime he did not commit, he was vigorously and wrongly prosecuted. He had to wait more than five years before he was declared an innocent man.

4. In bringing this action, Mr. Bledsoe seeks to vindicate his rights under laws of this country, which prohibit malicious prosecution and wrongful use of the judicial process.

5. At bottom, Mr. Bledsoe was ruthlessly pursued for a crime he did not commit and punished by a system that willfully and knowingly relies on a systemic practice of forcing innocent people from marginalized communities to plea bargain.

6. At some point between August 4 and August 7, Mr. Bledsoe dutifully responded to the work order from Port City Realty and, as he was repairing the window at the Dalzell Street Property, he cut himself.

7. Unbeknownst to Mr. Bledsoe, the glass window had been broken during an alleged burglary. That burglary was reported on August 4, 2015 by the rental tenant of this rental property, Sandra Robinson. The Dalzell Street Property was leased to Robinson by Repelican Brewing Co., LLC, and managed by Port City Realty.

8. On August 4, 2015, in response to Robinson's report of the burglary, Defendant McClure was dispatched to the Dalzell Street Property. There, he interviewed Robinson and collected fingerprints. In his report, Defendant McClure indicated that Robinson stated that she had been absent from her home since August 2, 2015, and when she returned on August 4, she found: (a) the front door unlocked, (b) the window in the front door broken, and (c) certain items missing. Defendant McClure did not ask Robinson whether she owned or leased the home.

9. Three days later, on August 7, 2015, Defendant McClure returned for a follow up interview with Robinson. By this time, the window had been repaired. And yet, in the August 7 report, there is no mention of this fact. Rather, the report indicates that Robinson informed Defendant McClure that she recently noticed a small amount of blood near the front door window.

10. Defendant McClure did not ask Robinson about when the window had been fixed, or by whom. Nor did he follow up with any questions about whether third parties were given access to the Dalzell Street Property as of right, a condition that typically accords with tenancy in a rental unit.

11. Instead, Defendant McClure collected the blood sample.

12. That sample was later determined to be a match for Mr. Bledsoe—the Plaintiff and the contractor sent by Port City Realty to repair the broken window.

13. With these results in hand, Sergeant Dean Willis—an investigator from the Shreveport Police Department's Property Crimes Investigations Unit who was also assigned to the alleged burglary at the Dalzell Street Property—contacted Robinson.

14. Defendant Willis asked Robinson whether she knew a Mr. Bledsoe, and whether she had given him permission to enter and remove items from the Dalzell Street Property. Robinson, omitting any mention of the fact that the window had been repaired or that she was

merely a tenant at the Dalzell Street Property, stated that she did not know a Mr. Bledsoe and did not give him permission to enter the Dalzell Street Property.

15. During the entirety of the police investigation, neither Defendant McClure nor Defendant Willis inquired into Robinson's ownership status of the Dalzell Street Property; whether Robinson oversaw repairs of the Dalzell Street Property; whether she contacted the owner of the Dalzell Street Property to conduct repairs; or whether the owner or rental management company authorized Mr. Bledsoe to repair the broken window at the Dalzell Street Property, which by August 7, 2015 had clearly been repaired. Defendants McClure and Willis also never contacted the Dalzell Street Property's management company or owner to determine who fixed the broken window.<sup>1</sup> No information on the Dalzell Street Property's owner, the Dalzell Street Property's management company, or the fact that the window had been fixed was listed in any police report.

16. Notwithstanding the deficient investigation, and based solely on the belatedly discovered blood sample and the tenant's lack of acquaintance with Mr. Bledsoe, Defendant Willis submitted an affidavit in support of his request for a warrant to arrest Mr. Bledsoe. That warrant, for felony burglary, was promptly granted and Mr. Bledsoe was arrested.

17. But Mr. Bledsoe should have never been arrested. If Defendants McClure and Willis had conducted a proper investigation, they would have realized that Mr. Bledsoe was properly at the Dalzell Street Property, and that his presence there occurred *after* the alleged burglary. In fact, he was at the Dalzell Street Property subject to a work order from Port City Realty—work for which he was paid \$87.00.

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<sup>1</sup> The identity of the owner of the Dalzell Street Property is available publicly online through the Shreveport Tax Offices's property search form. *See, e.g.*, Ex. A attached hereto.

18. Even after the arrest, when presented with exculpatory evidence, CPDAO refused to drop the charges against Mr. Bledsoe. Instead, the Office doubled down, pressuring Mr. Bledsoe to accept a guilty plea. He would not—and did not—plead guilty to a crime he did not commit, despite the pressure on him to accept a plea.

19. Louisiana leads the United States in incarceration rate per capita, and has been called the “world’s prison capital.”<sup>2</sup>

20. This high incarceration rate is caused at least in part by overly aggressive prosecution and coercive plea bargaining.

21. In particular, CPDAO has a policy, practice, and custom for not dropping prosecutions, no matter how weak the evidence, or the case, against the accused.

22. Here, without any incupatory evidence at all, the police and CPDAO dodgedly pursued Mr. Bledsoe to almost his breaking point, in an attempt to get him to cop a plea to a crime he did not commit.

23. Significantly, Mr. Bledsoe presented CPDAO with exculpatory evidence that was not considered. In support of his defense, on October 5, 2017, he provided documents to CPDAO establishing that:

- The Dalzell Street Property was a rental property;
- The landlord/property owner was Repelican Brewing Co., LLC;
- Port City Realty was the Dalzell Street Property management company for the Dazell St. property;
- Port City Realty had performed repair work at the Dalzell Street Property numerous times as a general matter, both prior to, in response to, and after the alleged burglary;

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<sup>2</sup> *How Louisiana Became the World’s ‘Prison Capital,’* NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO, June 5, 2012, <https://www.npr.org/2012/06/05/154352977/how-louisiana-became-the-worlds-prison-capital>.

- Mr. Bledsoe had been assigned and paid for work at the Dalzell Street Property on numerous occasions, including for the broken window in question; and
- Mr. Bledsoe had been paid by Port City Realty to repair the broken window.

24. Nonetheless, CPDAO did not further inquire or investigate Mr. Bledsoe's exculpatory evidence. Instead, CPDAO pressured Mr. Bledsoe to accept a plea—offering numerous plea deals, calling for numerous court dates, and then requesting numerous continuances to the trial date, with the hopes that Mr. Bledsoe would inadvertently miss a court date. This was all a concerted effort to coerce Mr. Bledsoe into pleading guilty to a crime he did not commit.

25. The only evidence that CPDAO had were blood samples that linked Mr. Bledsoe's DNA to the blood sample found at the Dazell Street Property—which was discovered days after the alleged burglary—*after* the initial investigation and *after* the window was fixed. Although fingerprints had been taken at the Dazell Street Property on August 2, 2015, when Defendant McClure first investigated the alleged burglary, there is no record they were ever reviewed at the time. It was only years later, in 2020, that Assistant District Attorney Defendant Arvie inquired about the status of the fingerprints, which were lifted from the front and back doors and the window on the Dalzell Street Property, to see if they had been submitted for comparison. She was told that, without any date of review, the prints were “non-identifiable” and the “case was made solely on the blood evidence collected inside the residence.”

26. Nevertheless, absent any evidence available to convict Mr. Bledsoe, Defendants Arvie and Stewart refused to dismiss the charges.

27. Instead, CPDAO, under Defendant Stewart's leadership, subjected Mr. Bledsoe to multiple court appearances. Predictably, when he accidentally failed to appear at a hearing, a bench warrant issued, and Mr. Bledsoe was taken into custody on July 9, 2018. Mr. Bledsoe remained in custody until May 11, 2020, when he released to house arrest due to COVID-19. In

the end, Mr. Bledsoe's incarceration occurred because he refused to plead guilty to a crime he did not commit.

28. Mr. Bledsoe's criminal trial concerning misdemeanor theft and criminal trespass commenced on January 5, 2021. By the end of the trial, the prosecution admitted it had failed to prove misdemeanor theft. The next day, after reviewing the remaining evidence, the Court found Mr. Bledsoe "not guilty" of criminal trespass. In the end, the Court "did not see enough evidence for that crime to prove the elements of it beyond a reasonable doubt." Indeed, a contractor assigned to conduct repairs at a rental property is not a trespasser.

29. CPDAO's relentless prosecution notwithstanding the significant exculpatory evidence available, and the knowledge that the original investigation was severely deficient, is unfortunately not an isolated incident. CPDAO has a policy, practice, and custom of engaging in unrelenting prosecutions, no matter how weak or specious the evidence or the case is against the accused. This practice, which permeates CPDAO, is directed by its most senior officials and disproportionately harms those on the lower end of the socio-economic ladder in Caddo Parish. Those most severely affected by this practice are generally:

- Less able to afford private counsel;
- Unable to post bail;
- Forced to rely on public defenders who are often inexperienced and overworked, and thus incentivized to encourage plea deals over litigating cases to trial; and
- Disproportionately harmed by the effects of repeated court appearances and incarceration, including job loss, lost income, eviction, loss of relationships, loss of child custody, and loss of reputation in the community.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., ACLU of Louisiana, *Justice Can't Wait: An Indictment of Louisiana's Pretrial System* (Feb. 10, 2020), at 9, [https://www.laaclu.org/sites/default/files/field\\_documents/aclu\\_la\\_justicecantwaitreport\\_02102020\\_online.pdf](https://www.laaclu.org/sites/default/files/field_documents/aclu_la_justicecantwaitreport_02102020_online.pdf) ("The consequences of time in jail are so dire that peopled jailed pretrial are more likely to plead guilty, even when they are actually innocent, just so they can be

30. Mr. Bledsoe was just doing his job in August 2015 when he repaired the window at the Dalzell Street Property. Little did he know then that the simple fact of showing up to work and doing your job could get you thrown in jail and criminally prosecuted. His life was upended the day he was arrested and jailed for no reason. And the nightmare continued on for years—all because he refused to admit to a crime he did not commit. He was subjected to multiple appearances, and continuances—and, when he accidentally missed one of the many appearances, Mr. Bledsoe was served with a warrant for his arrest, at gunpoint, and was incarcerated for nearly two years. Mr. Bledsoe lost his job because of his arrest. He lost his social security disability because of his incarceration. He was in danger of losing his only home for failure to make payments. He also suffered health consequences. All of this was a result of nothing more than showing up for an honest day's work.

31. This country's legal system provides remedies for such grave miscarriages of justice.

## II. THE PARTIES

32. Plaintiff Gregory James Bledsoe is a person of majority and a resident of Shreveport, Louisiana.

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released. Many are haunted by a criminal record as a result.”); *see also* New York County Lawyers Association, *NYCLE Justice Center Task Force: Solving the Problem of Innocent People Pleading Guilty* (June 25, 2019) at 2, <https://www.nycla.org/pdf/NYCLA%20Board%20Report%20-%20Solving%20the%20Problem%20of%20Innocent%20People%20Pleading%20Guilty.pdf> (“Many [plead guilty] because they cannot bear the costs of repeated court appearances, including lost work and/or necessary child care expenses.”); *Juleyka Lantigua-Williams, Why Poor, Low-Level Offenders Often Plead to Worse Crimes*, THE ATLANTIC, July 24, 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/07/why-pretrial-jail-can-mean-pleading-to-worse-crimes/491975/> (“Facing the possibility of spending months in jail waiting for trial, many defendants plead guilty, even if they have to pay hefty fines or endure years of probation.”).



33. Defendant Dean Willis is a resident of Shreveport, Louisiana. At all relevant times, he was a sergeant and detective with the Shreveport Police Department's Property Crimes Investigations Unit, Badge #395. He is sued in his individual capacity.

34. Defendant David McClure is a resident of Shreveport, Louisiana. At all relevant times, he was an officer with the Shreveport Police Department, Badge #1323. He is sued in his individual capacity.

35. Defendant Brittany B. Arvie is a resident of Shreveport, Louisiana. At all relevant times, she was an assistant district attorney in the Caddo Parish District Attorney's Office. She is sued in her individual capacity.

36. James E. Stewart, Sr. is a resident of Shreveport, Louisiana. At all relevant times, he was the District Attorney of Caddo Parish. Mr. Stewart is, and at all relevant times has been, the final policymaker with respect to criminal prosecutions by the District Attorney's Office in Caddo Parish. Since being sworn into office in 2015, Mr. Stewart has been responsible for the supervision, administration, policies, practices, and customs of CPDAO. Mr. Stewart has been responsible for the hiring, training, discipline, supervision, and control of the Assistant District Attorneys, including Ms. Arvie. As a matter of federal law, Mr. Stewart is liable for his own actions as final policymaker. As a matter of Louisiana state law, he is liable for his own actions.

### **III. JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

37. This Court has original jurisdiction pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1343. This case and controversy arises under the United States Constitution and the laws of the United States, including 42 U.S.C. § 1983. This Court has supplemental jurisdiction over Plaintiff's Louisiana state law claims pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1367.

38. Venue in the Western District of Louisiana is proper pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b)(1)-(2).

39. This Court has personal jurisdiction over each of the Defendants because they are each residents of Shreveport, Louisiana, in the Western District of Louisiana. Moreover, the wrongful conduct giving rise to Plaintiff's claims occurred in Caddo Parish, Louisiana, which is located within the Western District of Louisiana.

40. Declaratory relief is authorized by 28 U.S.C. § 2201. A declaration of law is necessary to determine the respective rights and duties of the parties.

#### **IV. STATEMENT OF FACTS**

##### **A. The Shreveport Police Department Performs a Severely Deficient Investigation.**

41. On August 4, 2015, Defendant McClure of the Shreveport Police Department was dispatched to the Dalzell Street Property in response to a reported burglary.

42. Defendant McClure made contact with the alleged victim, Sandra Robinson, who stated that she had been absent from the Dalzell Street Property since August 2, 2015; and, upon her arrival on August 4, she observed that the front door was unlocked and that the window in the front door had been "busted out." Robinson alleged a television, two tables, and two six-packs of Gatorade were missing.

43. Defendant McClure indicated in his August 4, 2015 Narrative Supplement to Offense Report that the "suspect(s) entered through the front door & exited out the back" and had "entered a back bedroom, opened a window, and propped it open."

44. Defendant McClure lifted fingerprints from the rear and bedroom doorknobs and from the window.

45. Defendant McClure also interviewed persons at a neighboring home. He indicated in his Narrative Supplement that the alleged burglary had not been observed by those persons.

46. Three days later, on August 7, 2015, Defendant McClure was dispatched to the Dalzell Street Property for a follow up and again interviewed the tenant, Robinson, who now stated that she observed a small amount of blood near the front door window. Neither Robinson nor Defendant McClure had observed blood on August 4, when both were in the unit discussing the alleged burglary.

47. According to his August 7, 2015 Narrative Supplement, Defendant McClure collected a blood sample from a “small splatch” of blood near the door window.

48. Robinson further advised that she had recently noticed a push-mower had also allegedly been taken during the burglary.

49. Over two months later, on October 27, 2015, Carla Pettis of the North Louisiana Criminalistics Laboratory allegedly received the DNA samples collected by Defendant McClure from the Dalzell Street Property.

50. On February 18, 2016, Candace Jones, Ph.D., with the North Louisiana Criminalistics Laboratory, released a Preliminary Report identifying the blood collected from the Dalzell Street Property as a match for a Mr. Gregory Bledsoe.

51. On April 21, 2016, nearly eight months after the alleged burglary, Defendant Willis—an investigator assigned to the Shreveport Police Department’s Property Crimes Investigations Unit—was assigned to the investigation of the alleged burglary at the Dalzell Street Property.

52. According to his April 21, 2016 Narrative Supplement, Defendant Willis was notified that the DNA collected from near the front door window was a match for Mr. Bledsoe.

53. In that same report, Defendant Willis indicated that he would contact Robinson to determine if she knew Mr. Bledsoe or if he had permission to enter her residence.

54. Sometime between April 21, 2016 and May 4, 2016, Defendant Willis contacted Robinson.

55. According to Defendant Willis's May 4, 2016 Narrative Supplement, Robinson indicated that she did not know Mr. Bledsoe, and that she had never given him permission to enter or remove items from her residence.

56. Neither Defendant McClure—who was physically present at the Dazell Street Property on August 4 and August 7, 2015—nor Defendant Willis (who had been tasked with finishing the investigation of the alleged burglary) documented ever asking Robinson about the ownership status of the Dalzell Street Property, or whether Robinson was in charge of repairs of the Dalzell Street Property.

57. On April 27, 2016, Defendant Willis signed an affidavit for an arrest warrant identifying the purported circumstances of the alleged burglary, including the broken window. In his affidavit, he alleged that Mr. Bledsoe committed the offense of simple burglary of an inhabited dwelling in violation of Louisiana R.S. 14:62.2. He reached this conclusion based solely on the collected blood sample's match to Mr. Bledsoe.

58. A person found guilty of committing simple burglary under Louisiana R.S. 14:62-2 "shall be fined not more than two thousand dollars, imprisoned with or without hard labor for not more than twelve years, or both."

59. The arrest warrant was issued by a District Judge that same day.

**B. Mr. Bledsoe Is Arrested, Released on Bond and Presents the Caddo Parish District Attorney's Office with Exonerating Evidence.**

60. On June 2, 2016, Officer Bailey of the Shreveport Police Department, Badge #1335, approached Mr. Bledsoe and another individual at a traffic stop for allegedly dumping tires next to a residence.

61. Officer Bailey identified Mr. Bledsoe and was alerted to the April 27, 2016 warrant for the alleged burglary of the Dalzell Street Property. Officer Bailey arrested and took Mr. Bledsoe into custody. Mr. Bledsoe's picture was in the local news, identifying him as an individual with an outstanding warrant for burglary.<sup>4</sup>

62. Mr. Bledsoe appeared before The Honorable Brady D. O'Callaghan on June 3, 2016 in relation to the alleged burglary.

63. Mr. Bledsoe advised the Court that he did not have and could not afford a lawyer, and the Court appointed the Indigent Defender's Office to represent Mr. Bledsoe.

64. On June 10, 2016, Mr. Bledsoe posted bond in the amount of \$5,000 and was released from jail.

65. On July 6, 2016, Mr. Bledsoe pleaded not guilty to the charge of simple burglary of an inhabited dwelling.

66. Between June 10, 2016 and October 5, 2017, Mr. Bledsoe collected evidence demonstrating his innocence, including documents attesting to the fact that he was in fact authorized (by Port City Realty) to be at the Dalzell Street Property to repair the broken front door window.

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<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., *2 Suspected 'Litter Bugs' Charged in Shreveport*, KSLA NEWS, June 7, 2016, <https://www.ksla.com/story/32166757/2-suspected-litter-bugs-charged-in-shreveport/>; see also Clay Kirby, *Two Charged Accused of Littering in Shreveport*, KTBS, June 7, 2016, [https://www.ktbs.com/news/two-charged-accused-of-littering-in-shreveport/article\\_bc2d42d6-f64a-5ddb-97f2-2edc5443d714.html](https://www.ktbs.com/news/two-charged-accused-of-littering-in-shreveport/article_bc2d42d6-f64a-5ddb-97f2-2edc5443d714.html).

67. The evidence collected showed that at least as early as August 11, 2014, Port City Realty was the management company for the Dalzell Street Property, and was hired to make repairs to and perform service calls in the event of a lock out at the Dalzell Street Property.

68. The evidence further showed that, at all relevant times, the Dalzell Street Property was (a) owned by Repelican Brewing Co., LLC, and (b) occupied by rental tenants, one of which was Sandra Robinson.

69. At the time, Mr. Bledsoe worked for Port City Realty as an independent contractor.

70. In the course of his work at the direction of Port City Realty, Mr. Bledsoe was assigned at least five repairs and/or lock out service calls at the Dalzell Street Property.

71. Between August 4 and August 7, 2015, the company in charge of managing Port City Realty, provided Mr. Bledsoe with a work order to repair the front door window of the Dalzell Street Property, which had been broken during the alleged burglary.

72. In the process of repairing the window, Mr. Bledsoe was cut by glass.

73. Mr. Bledsoe was paid by Port City Realty for his repair work at the Dalzell Street Property and for repair work done at three other properties on August 13, 2015.

74. On October 5, 2017, Mr. Bledsoe, through Assistant Public Defender Mary L. Harried, filed a Response to the State's Motion for Discovery. He provided CPDAO with copies of Port City Realty documents demonstrating the payment for his services on August 13, 2015 for repairs performed at the Dalzell Street Property. He also produced a general ledger of payments issued for work and/or service calls made by Port City Realty to the Dalzell Street Property from July 1, 2013 through September 29, 2017.

75. Between 2016 and 2018, Mr. Bledsoe dutifully returned to court, only to have the state request a continuance of the trial date in each instance—all in an effort to secure a guilty plea.

76. On July 9, 2018, a bench warrant was issued for Mr. Bledsoe's arrest when he mistakenly failed to appear at a hearing because he mixed up the dates. That same day, once he realized his error, he immediately contacted his public defender to mitigate any harm that could result. In response, the public defender did not see any avenue for mitigation. Instead, she told Mr. Bledsoe that, as a result, a warrant would issue for his arrest. At the time, Mr. Bledsoe was recovering from gallbladder surgery and had just returned home after a prolonged, two-week stay at the hospital that sought to address complications from the surgery.

77. Later that same day, the police, with guns drawn, came to Mr. Bledsoe's home. The streets were lined with police cars, and Mr. Bledsoe, staples recently removed from his surgery, was immediately taken into custody and jailed. At the jail he remained—incarcerated for nearly two years, until May 11, 2020, for his failure to appear on a continued hearing for a crime he did not commit.

78. It was not until a judge granted Mr. Bledsoe's *pro se* motion for conditional release on home detainment with electronic monitoring that Mr. Bledsoe left the jail. Mr. Bledsoe's grounds for release hinged on the proliferation of the COVID-19 pandemic in jails.

79. From May 11, 2020 until resolution of his trial on January 6, 2021, Mr. Bledsoe was confined to his home with limited exceptions. He was allowed to obtain groceries, attend medical appointments, and appear in court.

80. Due to his incarceration and home detainment:

- Mr. Bledsoe lost his social security disability benefits,<sup>5</sup> which was his primary source of income since he lost his job, as the result of the wrongful arrest and detainment.

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<sup>5</sup> Mr. Bledsoe previously received social security disability based on his diagnosed diabetes, sleep apnea and congenitive heart disease.

- He was unable to timely make payments on his home, and is in continued danger of losing his house due to numerous missed payments.
- He was forced to sell two cars in lieu of income to pay his bills; and
- He was fired by his employer and not rehired.

**C. The Caddo Parish District Attorney's Office Continues to Prosecute Mr. Bledsoe and Offer Plea Deals Notwithstanding the Exonerating Evidence.**

81. At least as early as October 5, 2017, via Mr. Bledsoe's Response to the State's Motion for Discovery, CPDAO, including Defendant Arvie, was provided notice:

- As to the status of the Dalzell Street Property as a rental property;
- That the owner of the Dalzell Street Property was Repelican Brewing Co., LLC;
- That Port City Realty was the management company for the Dalzell Street Property;
- That Port City Realty had performed repair work at the Dalzell Street Property numerous times prior to the alleged burglary; and
- That Mr. Bledsoe had been assigned and paid for work at the Dalzell Street Property on numerous occasions, including a payment shortly after the alleged burglary for repair work.

82. Upon information and belief, CPDAO did not further inquire or investigate into the facts disclosed in Mr. Bledsoe's produced documents.

83. On June 8, 2020, Defendant Arvie filed a Supplemental Response to Defendant's Motion for Discovery purporting to attach "a copy of the certified lab report in this matter (if any), which the State intend to offer into evidence as proof by certificate in conformity with La. R.S. 15:499-501."

84. Attached to the Supplemental Response was an email exchange between Defendant Arvie and Defendant Willis. In the email exchange, Defendant Arvie asks Defendant Willis whether the fingerprints collected from the Dalzell Street Property by Defendant McClure "had been submitted for comparison." Defendant Willis advised that he "contacted our crime scene unit



to have them check the status of the prints and were [sic] told the prints were non-identifiable,” and that “[t]he case was made solely on the blood evidence collected inside the residence.”

85. Notwithstanding the exculpatory evidence provided by Mr. Bledsoe and the lack of any inculpatory evidence other than the collected blood samples for which there was a reasonable explanation, CPDAO maintained that Mr. Bledsoe should be convicted. As such, they offered him numerous plea deals, including pleading to lesser offenses. They first offered to charge him with simple burglary of an inhabited dwelling for which he would receive three years’ imprisonment. They then offered 18 months’ imprisonment. Next, they offered him time served. Finally, they proposed that he need only plead guilty to misdemeanor trespass.

86. Mr. Bledsoe refused all of the offered guilty plea deals.

87. These plea deals were a concerted effort to have Mr. Bledsoe plead guilty to a crime that CPDAO knew, or should have known, he did not commit.

88. Mr. Bledsoe’s public defenders nevertheless advised him to take said plea deals, notwithstanding the exculpatory evidence and the weakness of the evidence against Mr. Bledsoe. Mr. Bledsoe’s public defenders underscored to him that someone in his weakened financial condition would never, prior to trial, see CPDAO drop charges—no matter the weakness of their case, or insufficiency of evidence.

**D. The Caddo Parish District Attorney's Office Admits Defeat at Trial, Which Is Only Further Compounded by the Judge's "Not Guilty" Finding on the Sole Outstanding Criminal Charge.**

89. On January 5, 2021, left with no other option, CPDAO, through Defendant Arvie, filed an Amended Bill of Information, this time charging Mr. Bledsoe with lesser offenses of criminal trespass in violation of Louisiana R.S. 14:63 and misdemeanor theft in violation of Louisiana R.S. 14:67B(4). CPDAO dropped the charge for simple burglary of an inhabited dwelling, which was the basis for the initial Bill of Information.

90. Trial on the criminal trespass and misdemeanor theft charges began and concluded that same day, on January 5, 2021.

91. Mr. Bledsoe waived his formal arraignment on those charges and pleaded not guilty.

92. At trial, Chris Cannatella, property manager at Port City Realty, testified that Port City Realty had managed the Dalzell Street Property since 2014.

93. Mr. Cannatella also testified that Port City Realty had hired Mr. Bledsoe many times as an independent contractor for simple handyman jobs.

94. Mr. Cannatella also testified that invoicing and payments for jobs can take a number of days to issue, and a check issued on August 13, 2015 would have been for work completed at least a week before that date.

95. When questioned on whether the management company would have a record of Mr. Bledsoe cutting himself, Mr. Cannatella also testified that, if an independent contractor was hurt on a job, he or she would *not* report that to Port City Realty unless it was particularly serious. In the end, he explained that each independent contractor is his or her "own business" and responsible for his or her own injuries.

96. Mr. Cannatella testified that (a) Port City Realty gave Mr. Bledsoe a “broken window work order,” (b) Mr. Bledsoe completed the job, and (c) was paid \$87 for his work.

97. During closing arguments, Defendant Arvie admitted that the State had not proven the count of misdemeanor theft.

98. In fact, there was no evidence presented at trial that anything had been taken from the Dalzell Street Property.

99. The Court took the criminal trespass case under advisement. The next day, based on lack of evidence, the Court found Mr. Bledsoe not guilty of criminal trespass.

**E. The Caddo Parish District Attorney’s Office has a Policy of Never Dropping Prosecutions No Matter How Weak and Notwithstanding the Existence of Exculpatory Evidence.**

100. Louisiana leads the United States in incarceration rate per capita, and has been called the “world’s prison capital.”

101. This high incarceration rate is caused at least in part by aggressive prosecution and coerced plea bargaining.

102. In particular, CPDAO has a policy, practice, and custom for not dropping prosecutions, no matter how weak the evidence, or the case, against the accused.

103. This aggressiveness in pursuit of convictions based on extremely weak evidence is not new.

104. Between about 2010 to 2015, Caddo Parish produced nearly half of the entire State’s death penalty sentences.

105. In 2015, the former District Attorney of Caddo Parish, Dale Cox, was quoted as saying “I think we need to kill more people . . . . I think the death penalty should be used more often.”<sup>6</sup>

106. A former Caddo Parish Assistant District Attorney was quoted in response to the comments of Mr. Cox, explaining that: “The behavior in and of itself might not be a big deal, but given the fact that the defendants in most of these capital cases are poor and black in a part of the state with a deep history of racism. He’s got a loaded gun and he’s pointing it at a lot of people.”<sup>7</sup>

107. In 2017, Associate Justice Stephen Breyer identified Caddo Parish, Louisiana as “a county that in recent history has apparently sentenced more people to death per capita than any other county in the United States.”<sup>8</sup> This was not the Justice’s first criticism of Caddo Parish on these grounds.<sup>9</sup>

108. In 2007, the Louisiana Supreme Court found that CPDAO had violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Constitution by striking a black prospective juror on account of his race.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Campbell Robertson, *The Prosecutor Who Says Louisiana Should ‘Kill More People’*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, July 7, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/08/us/louisiana-prosecutor-becomes-blunt-spokesman-for-death-penalty.html>.

<sup>7</sup> *Caddo DA Dale Cox Answers National Criticism on Death Penalty Record*, KSLA NEWS, July 8, 2015, <https://www.ksla.com/story/29505711/caddo-da-dale-cox-answers-national-criticism-on-death-penalty-record/>.

<sup>8</sup> *See Reed v. Louisiana*, 137 S. Ct. 787 (2017) (Breyer, J., dissenting from denial of certiorari) (“Marcus Dante Reed was sentenced to death in Caddo Parish, Louisiana, a county that in recent history has apparently sentenced more people to death per capita than any other county in the United States.”).

<sup>9</sup> *See Tucker v. Louisiana*, 578 U.S. 1018 (2016) (Breyer, J., dissenting from denial of certiorari) (“Tucker was sentenced to death in a Louisiana county (Caddo Parish) that imposes almost half the death sentences in Louisiana, even though it accounts for only 5% of that State’s population and 5% of its homicides.”).

<sup>10</sup> *State v. Coleman*, 2006-0518 (La. 11/2/07); 970 So. 2d 511, 516-17; *cf. State v. Crawford*, 2014-2153 (La. 11/16/16); 218 So. 3d 13, 35-36 (vacating conviction and remanding for new trial based on misapplication of the *Batson* burden framework and allegations that the CPDAO had unconstitutionally struck a prospective black juror).

109. CPDAO's policy of prosecution no matter the evidence, facts, or circumstances is demonstrated by the violations described above. CPDAO's policy permeates CPDAO and was and continues to be implemented from the highest levels of the Office.

110. This policy disproportionately harms poor and Black people in Caddo Parish,

- who are less likely be able to afford private counsel;
- must rely on public defenders that are overworked and thus incentivized to take plea deals over litigating cases to trial;
- are unable to post bail;
- and/or are severely harmed from the effects of repeated court appearances and incarceration, such as loss of a job, lost income, eviction, loss of relationships, loss of child custody, and loss of reputation in the community.

111. Defendant Stewart, as District Attorney, has continued the culture of pursuing unconstitutional prosecutions and the death penalty.

112. According to at least one former public defender in Shreveport, CPDAO is known to proceed with weak cases in order to give experience to junior prosecutors, such as Defendant Arvie.

113. CPDAO's policy of pursuing unconstitutional prosecutions is demonstrated by its conduct with respect to Mr. Bledsoe.

114. Mr. Bledsoe obtained and provided evidence of his innocence and yet CPDAO continued to prosecute him.

115. On or around June 2, 2020, Defendant Stewart assigned Defendant Arvie, an attorney who had been practicing law for only two years, to prosecute the charge of felony burglary.

116. On June 3, 2020, Defendant Willis confirmed to Defendant Arvie that the fingerprints lifted from the Dalzell Street Property were non-identifiable and “[t]he case [against Mr. Bledsoe] was made solely on the blood evidence collected inside the residence.”

117. Notwithstanding the overwhelming evidence of Mr. Bledsoe’s innocence and the lack of fingerprint evidence, CPDAO continued to press Mr. Bledsoe to accept a plea deal.

118. Mr. Bledsoe refused to plead guilty to a crime he did not commit and went forward with his constitutionally guaranteed right to trial on January 5, 2021. CPDAO, through Defendant Arvie, in recognition of the lack of evidence to make a case for the charge of felony simple burglary, filed an Amended Bill of Information substituting two lesser misdemeanor charges.

119. Crucially, this is not the first time that Mr. Bledsoe has been subjected to an unconstitutional prosecution by CPDAO. Between 2007 and 2009, Mr. Bledsoe was incarcerated on what he views as false charge for armed robbery with no evidence against him. Facing what appeared to be perpetual pre-trial incarceration due to his inability to post bond, Mr. Bledsoe ultimately accepted a plea deal from CPDAO. In 2004, Mr. Bledsoe was again, in his view, falsely charged with issuing worthless checks and, as a result, was incarcerated. Again, unable to post bond and fearing perpetual pre-trial incarceration, Mr. Bledsoe accepted a plea deal that allowed him to immediately leave the jail.

**FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**  
**Malicious Prosecution in Violation of the Fourth Amendment**  
**42 U.S.C. § 1983**  
*(Against Defendant Willis and Defendant McClure)*

120. Mr. Bledsoe reincorporates and realleges the above allegations in full.

121. The Fourth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution protects citizens against unreasonable search and seizure by law enforcement officers.

122. Defendant Willis and Defendant McClure caused the arrest and commencement of criminal proceedings against Mr. Bledsoe without sufficient probable cause based on a clearly deficient investigation.

123. Neither Defendant McClure nor Defendant Willis wrote in their official narrative reports that the broken front door window had been repaired when Defendant McClure went to the Dalzell Street Property on August 7, 2015, during which visit he was directed to blood near the front door window.

124. Neither Defendant McClure nor Defendant Willis wrote in their official narrative reports that Robinson was merely a rental tenant at the Dalzell Street Property.

125. Neither Defendant McClure nor Defendant Willis contacted the Dalzell Street Property owner or property management company to inquire whether anyone, including Mr. Bledsoe, had permission to enter the Dalzell Street Property.

126. Defendant Willis submitted an affidavit for an arrest warrant directed to Mr. Bledsoe based on the investigation by Defendant McClure and Defendant Willis.

127. The affidavit omitted the key facts described above, specifically that Robinson was merely a rental tenant of the Dalzell Street Property, that a property management company was authorized to make repairs at the Dalzell Street Property, and that the broken window had been repaired between the dates Defendant McClure visited the Dalzell Street Property.

128. Those omissions resulted from the wanton and reckless disregard by Defendant Willis and Defendant McClure for Mr. Bledsoe's constitutional rights.

129. Those omissions were material and were recklessly, intentionally, or knowingly omitted from the affidavit for arrest warrant.

130. But for those omissions, an arrest warrant was issued for Mr. Bledsoe for simple burglary of an inhabited dwelling, Louisiana R. S. 14:62.2.

131. The day trial began, the burglary charge was dropped and replaced with criminal trespassing, Louisiana R.S. 14:63, and misdemeanor theft, Louisiana R.S. 14:67B(4).

132. Mr. Bledsoe was found not guilty on both charges at trial.

133. The actions of Defendant Willis and Defendant McClure directly and proximately caused compensable injury to Mr. Bledsoe.

## **SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION**

### **Louisiana State Law Claim for Malicious Prosecution** *(Against Defendant Willis and Defendant McClure)*

134. Mr. Bledsoe reincorporates and realleges the above allegations in full.

135. Defendant Willis and Defendant McClure caused the arrest and commencement of criminal proceedings against Mr. Bledsoe without sufficient probable cause based on a clearly deficient investigation in violation of Louisiana law.

136. Neither Defendant McClure nor Defendant Willis wrote in their official narrative reports that the broken front door window had been repaired by the time Defendant McClure went to the Dalzell Street Property on August 7, 2015, during which visit he was directed to blood near the front door window.

137. Neither Defendant McClure nor Defendant Willis wrote in their official narrative reports that Robinson was merely a rental tenant at the Dalzell Street Property.

138. Neither Defendant McClure nor Defendant Willis contacted the Dalzell Street Property owner or property management company to inquire whether anyone, including Mr. Bledsoe, had permission to enter the Dalzell Street Property.



139. Defendant Willis submitted an affidavit for an arrest warrant directed to Mr. Bledsoe based on the investigation by Defendant McClure and Defendant Willis.

140. The affidavit omitted the key facts described above, specifically that Robinson was merely a rental tenant of the Dalzell Street Property; that a property management company was authorized to make repairs at the Dalzell Street Property; and that the broken window had been repaired between the dates Defendant McClure visited the Dalzell Street Property.

141. Those omissions resulted from the wanton and reckless disregard by Defendant Willis and Defendant McClure for Mr. Bledsoe's rights.

142. Those omissions were material and were recklessly, intentionally, or knowingly omitted from the affidavit for arrest warrant.

143. But for those omissions, an arrest warrant was issued for Mr. Bledsoe for simple burglary of an inhabited dwelling, Louisiana R. S. 14:62.2.

144. The day trial began, the burglary charge was dropped and replaced with criminal trespassing, Louisiana R.S. 14:63, and misdemeanor theft, Louisiana R.S. 14:67B(4).

145. Mr. Bledsoe was found not guilty on both charges at trial.

146. The actions of Defendant Willis and Defendant McClure directly and proximately caused compensable injury to Mr. Bledsoe.

### **THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION**

#### **Malicious Prosecution in Violation of the Fourth Amendment**

#### **42 U.S.C. § 1983**

*(Against Defendant Arvie)*

147. Mr. Bledsoe reincorporates and realleges the above allegations in full.

148. The Fourth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution protects citizens against unreasonable search and seizure by law enforcement officers.

149. Defendant Arvie caused the continuance of criminal proceedings against Mr. Bledsoe without sufficient probable cause based on a clearly deficient investigation, including the fact that Robinson was merely a rental tenant of the Dalzell Street Property, that Port City Realty was a property management company for the Dalzell Street Property and was authorized to be at or to dispatch independent contractors to the Dalzell Street Property for repairs, and that the front door window had been repaired between the first visit to the Dalzell Street Property by Defendant McClure and the subsequent visit wherein blood was found and later matched to Mr. Bledsoe.

150. Defendant Arvie caused the continuance of criminal proceedings against Mr. Bledsoe with an affirmative disregard for Mr. Bledsoe's response to the State's motion for discovery and documents served on Defendant Arvie and the Caddo Parish District Attorney's Office on October 5, 2017 demonstrating Mr. Bledsoe's innocence.

151. Defendant Arvie caused the continuance of criminal proceedings against Mr. Bledsoe by not following up on the investigation, including not inquiring as to the status of fingerprints lifted from the Dalzell Street Property on August 4, 2015 until June 2, 2020.

152. Defendant Arvie caused the continuance of criminal proceedings against Mr. Bledsoe with an affirmative disregard for the fact that the fingerprints lifted from the Dalzell Street Property on August 4, 2015 were found to be non-identifiable.

153. Notwithstanding Defendant Arvie's knowledge of the evidence of Mr. Bledsoe's innocence, the lack of any evidence in support of the charge against him, and the clearly deficient investigation by Defendant Willis and Defendant McClure, Defendant Arvie continued the prosecution of Mr. Bledsoe.

154. Notwithstanding Defendant Arvie's knowledge of the evidence of Mr. Bledsoe's innocence, the lack of any evidence in support of the charge against him, and the clearly deficient

investigation by Defendant Willis and Defendant McClure, Defendant Arvie offered numerous plea deals to Mr. Bledsoe in a concerted effort to coerce Mr. Bledsoe into pleading guilty to a crime he did not commit.

155. Defendant Arvie's maintaining of the lesser offense of a simple burglary charge against Mr. Bledsoe notwithstanding her knowledge of the evidence of Mr. Bledsoe's innocence, the lack of any evidence in support of the charge against him, and the clearly deficient investigation by Defendant Willis and Defendant McClure was a reckless, knowing, and/or intentional violation of Mr. Bledsoe's constitutional rights.

156. Defendant Arvie's maintaining of the simple burglary charge against Mr. Bledsoe notwithstanding her knowledge of the evidence of Mr. Bledsoe's innocence, the lack of any evidence in support of the charge against him, and the clearly deficient investigation by Defendant Willis and Defendant McClure was done with a wanton and reckless disregard for Mr. Bledsoe's constitutional rights.

157. The day trial began, Defendant Arvie caused the burglary charge against Mr. Bledsoe to be dropped and replaced with yet a still lesser offense of criminal trespassing, Louisiana R.S. 14:63, and misdemeanor theft, Louisiana R.S. 14:67B(4).

158. At the close of evidence, Defendant Arvie admitted that the State had failed to prove misdemeanor theft.

159. Mr. Bledsoe was found not guilty of criminal trespassing the day following the trial.

160. The actions of Defendant Arvie directly caused injury to Mr. Bledsoe and Mr. Bledsoe and all other individuals in Caddo Parish face an ongoing risk that the Caddo Parish District Attorney's Office, through Defendant Arvie, will violate their rights in this way again.

161. Mr. Bledsoe seeks a declaration that Defendant Arvie violated the constitutional rights of Mr. Bledsoe by maintaining the prosecution and offering numerous plea deals to Mr. Bledsoe notwithstanding evidence of his innocence. He further seeks an injunction requiring Defendant Arvie to undergo training regarding the constitutional rights of persons to be free from malicious prosecution and unconstitutional detention.

**FOURTH CAUSE OF ACTION**

**Failure to Supervise or Discipline  
42 U.S.C. § 1983**

*(Against Defendant Stewart in his official capacity)*

162. Mr. Bledsoe reincorporates and realleges the above allegations in full.

163. CPDAO has a policy, practice, and/or custom for not dropping prosecutions, no matter how weak the evidence, or the case, against the accused.

164. This policy, practice, and/or custom is implemented from the highest levels of CPDAO, specifically Defendant Stewart, and is executed through Caddo Parish Assistant District Attorneys, such as Defendant Arvie.

165. This policy, practice, and/or custom would chill a person of ordinary firmness from exercise of her rights.

166. As demonstrated here, Defendant Stewart allowed the continuance of criminal proceedings against Mr. Bledsoe without sufficient probable cause based on a clearly deficient investigation, including the fact that Robinson was merely a rental tenant of the Dalzell Street Property; that Port City Realty was a property management company for the Dalzell Street Property and was authorized to be at or to dispatch independent contractors to the Dalzell Street Property for repairs; and that the front door window had been repaired between the first visit to the Dalzell Street Property by Defendant McClure and the subsequent visit wherein blood was found and later matched to Mr. Bledsoe.

167. Defendant Stewart allowed the continuance of criminal proceedings against Mr. Bledsoe with an affirmative disregard for Mr. Bledsoe's response to the State's motion for discovery and documents served on Defendant Arvie on October 5, 2017 demonstrating Mr. Bledsoe's innocence.

168. Defendant Stewart allowed the continuance of criminal proceedings against Mr. Bledsoe by not following up on the investigation, including not inquiring as to the status of fingerprints lifted from the Dalzell Street Property on August 4, 2015 until June 2, 2020.

169. Defendants Arvie and Stewart allowed the continuance of criminal proceedings against Mr. Bledsoe with an affirmative disregard for the fact that the fingerprints lifted from the Dalzell Street Property on August 4, 2015 were found to be non-identifiable.

170. Notwithstanding their knowledge of the evidence of Mr. Bledsoe's innocence, the lack of any evidence in support of the charge against him, and the clearly deficient investigation by Defendants Willis and McClure, Defendant Stewart allowed the prosecution of Mr. Bledsoe to continue.

171. Notwithstanding the evidence of Mr. Bledsoe's innocence, the lack of any evidence in support of the charge against him, and the clearly deficient investigation by Defendants Willis and McClure, Defendant Stewart allowed numerous plea deals to be offered to Mr. Bledsoe in a concerted effort to coerce Mr. Bledsoe into pleading guilty to a crime he did not commit.

172. Allowing the maintenance of the simple burglary charge against Mr. Bledsoe notwithstanding knowledge of his innocence, the lack of any evidence in support of the charge against him, and the clearly deficient police investigation was a reckless, knowing, and/or intentional violation of Mr. Bledsoe's right be free from malicious prosecution.

173. The day trial began, Defendant Stewart allowed the burglary charge against Mr. Bledsoe to be dropped and replaced with criminal trespass, Louisiana R.S. 14:63, and misdemeanor theft, Louisiana R.S. 14:67B(4).

174. At the close of evidence, Defendant Arvie admitted that the State had failed to prove misdemeanor theft.

175. Mr. Bledsoe was found not guilty of criminal trespass the day following the trial.

176. The actions of Defendant Stewart directly caused injury to Mr. Bledsoe and Mr. Bledsoe and all other individuals in Caddo Parish face an ongoing risk that CPDAO will violate their rights in this way again.

177. This risk is evidenced not only by the prosecutions of Mr. Bledsoe, but also based on on the historical violations of constitutional rights by CPDAO.

178. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant Stewart's failure to supervise or discipline his staff, Mr. Bledsoe suffered actual physical and emotional injuries, and other damages and losses as described herein, entitling him to compensatory and special damages in amounts to be determined at trial.

179. Mr. Bledsoe seeks a declaration that Defendant Stewart violated his constitutional rights by maintaining an unconstitutional policy, practice, and/or custom at CPDAO for unconstitutional prosecutions no matter the facts, evidence of innocence, or rights of citizens to be free from malicious prosecution and unconstitutional detention. Mr. Bledsoe further seeks an injunction against Defendant Stewart to stop the policy, practice, and/or custom in place and face sanctions should he fail to do so.

**FIFTH CAUSE OF ACTION**

**Failure to Supervise or Discipline**

**42 U.S.C. § 1983**

*(Against Defendant Stewart in his official capacity)*

180. Mr. Bledsoe reincorporates and realleges the above allegations in full.

181. CPDAO acted with a deliberate indifference to the constitutional rights of Mr. Bledsoe to be free from malicious prosecution.

182. As demonstrated here, Defendant Stewart allowed the continuance of criminal proceedings against Mr. Bledsoe without sufficient probable cause based on a clearly deficient investigation, including the fact that Robinson was merely a rental tenant of the Dalzell Street Property; that Port City Realty was a property management company for the Dalzell Street Property and was authorized to be at or to dispatch independent contractors to the Dalzell Street Property for repairs; and that the front door window had been repaired between the first visit to the Dalzell Street Property by Defendant McClure and the subsequent visit wherein blood was found and later matched to Mr. Bledsoe.

183. Defendant Stewart allowed the continuance of criminal proceedings against Mr. Bledsoe with an affirmative disregard for Mr. Bledsoe's response to the State's motion for discovery and documents served on Defendant Arvie on October 5, 2017 demonstrating Mr. Bledsoe's innocence.

184. Defendant Stewart allowed the continuance of criminal proceedings against Mr. Bledsoe by not following up on the investigation, including not inquiring as to the status of fingerprints lifted from the Dalzell Street Property on August 4, 2015 until June 2, 2020.

185. Defendants Arvie and Stewart allowed the continuance of criminal proceedings against Mr. Bledsoe with an affirmative disregard for the fact that the fingerprints lifted from the Dalzell Street Property on August 4, 2015 were found to be non-identifiable.

186. Notwithstanding their knowledge of the evidence of Mr. Bledsoe's innocence, the lack of any evidence in support of the charge against him, and the clearly deficient investigation by Defendants Willis and McClure, Defendant Stewart allowed the prosecution of Mr. Bledsoe to continue.

187. Notwithstanding the evidence of Mr. Bledsoe's innocence, the lack of any evidence in support of the charge against him, and the clearly deficient investigation by Defendants Willis and McClure, Defendant Stewart allowed numerous plea deals to be offered to Mr. Bledsoe in a concerted effort to coerce Mr. Bledsoe into pleading guilty to a crime he did not commit.

188. Allowing the maintenance of the simple burglary charge against Mr. Bledsoe notwithstanding knowledge of his innocence, the lack of any evidence in support of the charge against him, and the clearly deficient police investigation was a reckless, knowing, and/or intentional violation of Mr. Bledsoe's right be free from malicious prosecution.

189. The day trial began, Defendant Stewart allowed the burglary charge against Mr. Bledsoe to be dropped and replaced with criminal trespass, Louisiana R.S. 14:63, and misdemeanor theft, Louisiana R.S. 14:67B(4).

190. At the close of evidence, Defendant Arvie admitted that the State had failed to prove misdemeanor theft.

191. Mr. Bledsoe was found not guilty of criminal trespass the day following the trial.

192. This risk is evidenced not only by the prosecution of Mr. Bledsoe, but on the historical violations of constitutional rights by the CPDAO.

193. The actions of Defendant Stewart directly caused injury to Mr. Bledsoe and Mr. Bledsoe and all other individuals in Caddo Parish face an ongoing risk that the Caddo Parish District Attorney's Office will violate their rights in this way again.



194. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant Stewart's failure to supervise, train, or discipline, Mr. Bledsoe suffered actual physical and emotional injuries, and other damages and losses as described herein entitling him to compensatory and special damages, in amounts to be determined at trial.

195. Mr. Bledsoe seeks a declaration that Defendant Stewart violated the constitutional rights of Mr. Bledsoe by allowing the CPDAO to maintain unrelenting prosecutions no matter the facts, evidence of innocence, or rights of citizens to be free from malicious prosecution and unconstitutional detention with deliberate indifference to the rights of the accused.

#### **V. JURY DEMAND**

196. Plaintiff demands a trial by jury on all issues and claims set forth in this Complaint pursuant to the Seventh Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 38(b).


#### **VI. PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

Plaintiff Gregory James Bledsoe respectfully requests the following relief:

- A. Compensatory damages against Defendants Willis, McClure, and Defendant Stewart in his official capacity as District Attorney of Caddo Parish in an amount to be determined at trial;
- B. Injunctive relief against Defendants Arvie and Stewart requiring them to end ongoing constitutional violations, and providing equitable relief in the court's discretion that ensures that the violations do not recur;
- C. Pre-judgment and post-judgment interest and recovery of Plaintiff's costs, including reasonable attorneys' fees pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1988 for all 42 U.S.C. § 1983 claims; and

D. Any and all other relief to which Plaintiff may be entitled and that the Court deems just and proper in its discretion.

Respectfully submitted this 21 day of December, 2021.

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