

# Mock Trial Exercises

Featuring winning cases from the  
New Jersey State Bar Foundation's

# Law Adventure 2025 Competition

For Grades 7–8





# Preface

IN 1995-96 THE NEW JERSEY STATE BAR FOUNDATION LAUNCHED A UNIQUE, LAW-RELATED EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS – THE LAW ADVENTURE COMPETITION.

Students in grades seven and eight and their teachers are invited to create original mock trial cases. Each year the Foundation provides themes for cases. The cases are judged on the basis of originality and educational value in teaching students about their legal rights and responsibilities. Winners are selected in each grade level. The trials are then conducted before student audiences at special Law Adventure programs in the spring. The seventh- and eighth-grade audiences serve as juries.

Following are the winning cases from the Law Adventure 2025 Competition. The theme for the 2025 contest was the Bill of Rights.

The cases may be used as a guide to prepare a submission to the Law Adventure Competition or as a classroom exercise. Please note that some of the cases may contain “laws” created by the students for the purpose of this competition, which may not necessarily be actual laws. Since these mock trials were written by children, the content should not be considered technically accurate.

*These materials are produced for educational purposes only. The content for each submission was created by the winning team and should not*

*be interpreted to reflect the views or positions of the New Jersey State Bar Foundation. To make the scenarios more meaningful and allow students to reflect on actual conflicts they may confront, the submissions sometimes touch upon issues reported in some of the challenging news stories of our day; however, please note that all characters, names, events and circumstances are fictitious. No resemblance or reference to real individuals, events or circumstances is intended or should be inferred.*

This project is made possible by funding from the IOLTA Fund of the Bar of New Jersey.

Law Adventure won recognition in the Associations Advance America Awards program, a national competition sponsored by the American Society of Association Executives in Washington, D.C. This prestigious award recognized innovative projects that advance American society in education, skills training, community service and citizenship.

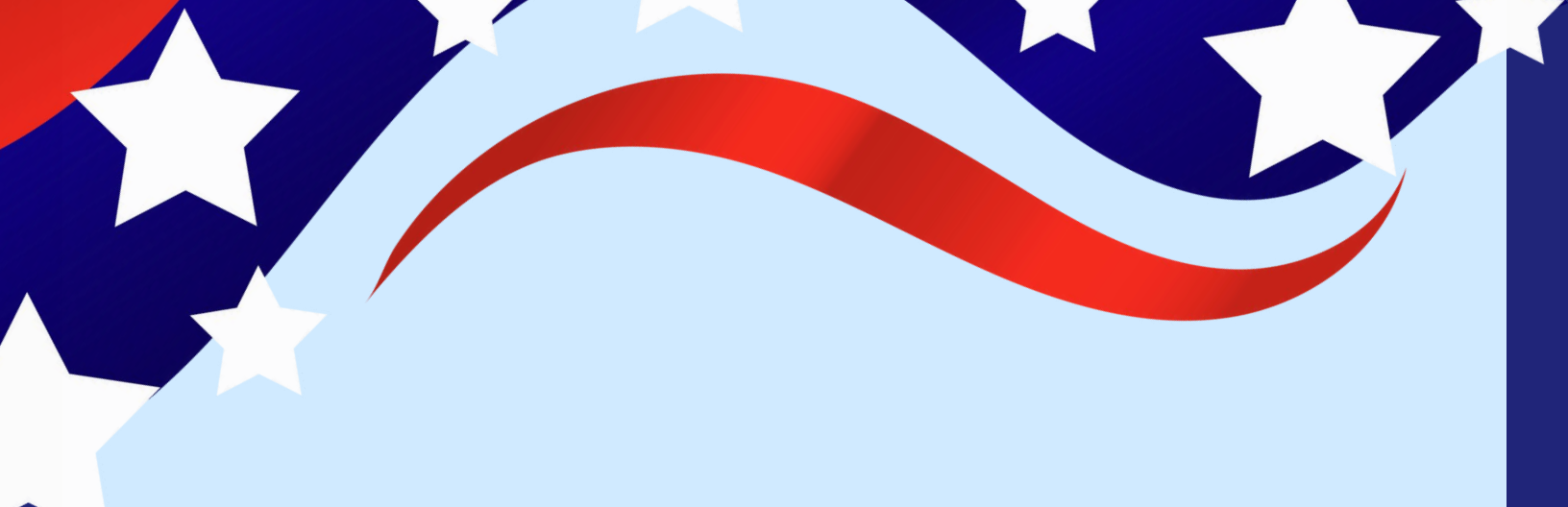
If you would like to participate in the Law Adventure Competition, please e-mail [sboro@njsbf.org](mailto:sboro@njsbf.org) or call 732-937-7519.

*For information about other free, law-related education services available from the New Jersey State Bar Foundation, visit us online at [njsbf.org](http://njsbf.org).*

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# **A Real Pain: Jones v. Anderson Middle School**

***School***  
Great Meadows Middle  
Great Meadows  
Grade 7  
First Place

***Teacher***  
Bill Nutt

***Students***

Helena Butkosky  
Kaitlyn Daly  
Andrew Erickson  
Evelyn Gallo  
Sierra Griglak  
Dagny Grillo

Danila Karseva  
Ava Lewin  
Ryan Russo  
Cassidy Schaaf  
Ellen Schaaf  
Haley Schmidt

Jason Snyder  
Ava Sousa  
Brielle Torres  
Hailey Yoza  
Hunter Zaccheo

## FACTS

Alex Jones is a student at Anderson Middle School, which covers grades 5 through 8. For his first two years, he had a reputation as a troublemaker. He was accused of acts of vandalism and destroying school property, and teachers regularly complained about his poor attitude. In the middle of 7th grade, though, he seemed to undergo a change, partly because he was afraid that his behavior and attitude would keep him off the soccer team in high school.

Shortly before the beginning of his 8th-grade year, Alex was playing a match with a travel soccer team when he tore his ACL. The injury required surgery, and he was given pain management medication to take at least twice a day.

On the first day of school, Alex went to the nurse's office to drop off the medication, which he knew was on a list of substances normally not allowed in the school. However, Anderson Middle School had recently lost its full-time nurse, and the position was filled by a substitute who had to cover two buildings. Unable to find the nurse and concerned that he would be late for class if he waited in the main office, Alex put the medication in his backpack and hurriedly threw the backpack in his locker. In his haste, he failed to realize that the locker door was not completely shut.

That morning, while the students were at an opening assembly, security guard Howard Ling was monitoring the halls when he noticed the locker door ajar, with the backpack slightly sticking out. He used his passkey to open the locker and close the door completely when he spotted a medicine bottle. Ling was able to see from the label that the contents of the bottle were on the list of unapproved substances. He confiscated the bottle and went to alert Principal Bejon Sanders, who was in the school gym for an opening day assembly. Learning about the substance, Principal Sanders had Alex leave the assembly and go to the office; she also

contacted Alex's mother, Charlie Jones, who immediately came to the school.

Though the issue of the medication was quickly resolved, Ms. Jones felt that the school had acted in an unfair manner, singling out Alex and violating his Fourth Amendment rights. In addition, Alex felt humiliation upon being called out of the assembly in front of the entire school. For these reasons, Ms. Jones is suing the school for a total of \$100,000, plus legal expenses.

## ISSUE

Were Alex Jones' rights under the Fourth Amendment violated by the actions of the Anderson Middle School administration?

## WITNESSES

### *For the Plaintiff*

Alex Jones

Charlie Jones

### *For the Defense*

Howard Ling

Bejon Sanders

## WITNESS STATEMENTS

### *Testimony of Alex Jones*

My name is Alex Jones, and I am starting 8th grade at Anderson Middle School. I wanted to start this year with a clean slate because I don't want to be known as the "bad kid" anymore. I really love soccer, but I won't get on the team if my reputation is the same as my 7th-grade year. I also realized that, unless I straightened out, I might not be allowed to play on the varsity soccer team in high school, which has been a dream of mine. Knowing that, I've been trying to change my reputation at my school.

This past summer I was on a travel soccer team. At a match in mid-August, I tore my ACL and ended up having surgery. I'm not allowed to play soccer this fall, but I should be healed enough to play in the spring - and, I hope, in high school.

On the first day of the new school year, my mom wrote a note and told me to drop off the medication with the school nurse. I went to the nurse's office as soon as I arrived at school, but the nurse wasn't there. I then went to the office, but it was crowded with people. Then the first bell rang. I didn't want to be marked late on my first day, so I had to rush down the hall, throw my backpack in my locker, and get to my homeroom. Because I was afraid of running late, I threw my backpack into the locker and slammed the door. I figured I would go to the office during my lunch period to drop off the medication.

That morning, we had an assembly for the whole school. While one of the teachers was talking, I saw Principal Sanders called to the side to talk with the security guard, Mr. Ling. In the past, Mr. Ling and I haven't gotten along too well. Principal Sanders then walked over with a very serious look on her face and told me to come to the office. I had to get up in front of the whole school and follow her. I was so embarrassed! I headed down and sat down in the office.

Principal Sanders explained that Mr. Ling had seen my open locker and noticed the bottle of painkillers on the floor of the locker. They said the medication was on a list of drugs that may only be in possession of the school nurse. I explained that I needed that medicine and that I had tried to give it to the nurse at the beginning of the day, but no one was in the nurse's office.

When my mother arrived, she was furious that the school was able to open my locker and take something from it. Principal Sanders said that, under the Fourth Amendment, schools are allowed to open lockers and that the bottle of medicine was plainly visible. Honestly, I thought I had put the bottle in a pocket with a flap when I shut the locker. I guess it might have fallen out when I put the backpack in the locker. But I really think that I was unfairly singled out because of my reputation. It completely

ruined the beginning of my 8th grade year, just when I was trying to be a better person. It's almost like everything I've been trying to do to turn my life around was for nothing.

### ***Testimony of Charlie Jones***

My name is Charlie Jones, and I'm Alex Jones' mother. Alex has had a tough time the first couple of years of middle school. He's not a bad kid, but he hasn't always thought before he acted, and in the past, he's hung around with other kids who aren't good for him. About halfway through 7th grade, he promised me that things were going to change. And toward the end of last year, things improved. He told me more than once that his goal for his last year in middle school was for it to be his best year and that he would prove he was ready for high school.

Unfortunately, while playing soccer over the summer, he tore his ACL. He had to have surgery, and for several weeks afterwards he had to take pain management medication. The new school year was starting, and I knew that the medication was considered a controlled substance, so I told Alex that it was very important for him to bring it to the nurse right away. Not halfway through the morning, I received a call from the school saying they found an inappropriate substance in his backpack. I rushed to the school to find out what the story was. When I got there, I was told that Alex might face expulsion for bringing in his pain medication. Alex and I explained about his injury and how he tried to give the medication to the nurse, but no one was in that office, and he intended to bring it down during his lunch period.

Although I'm not a lawyer, I know something about the Fourth Amendment, and I didn't think it was right for the school to search a student's locker for no reason. Principal Sanders told me the school was within its rights to open any locker, but they did not have the right to search a backpack or clothing; however, in this case the medications were in plain sight.

After hearing that, I demanded to speak with the security guard and asked to see exactly where he found the bottle. As we walked down the hall to Alex's locker, I noticed that there were a couple of other lockers that weren't completely closed, and I wondered if the guard was going to check those lockers, too. He opened Alex's locker and showed me how the bottle was resting right on the backpack. I told him that I had a hard time believing the bottle just fell out in a way that the security guard could see it.

I feel justified in suing the school for \$100,000, plus legal costs. First of all, it seems irresponsible that the nurse would not be in their office on the first day of school. In addition, I don't think it was necessary for Mr. Ling to open Alex's locker even if it was open; he could have just called Alex out to take care of it himself. It almost feels as if Mr. Ling was looking for a reason for Alex to get in trouble. This was a "search" without any cause and so should not be allowed under the Fourth Amendment.

### ***Testimony of Howard Ling***

My name is Howard Ling, and I'm the security guard at Anderson Middle School. I was hired about a year ago. It's a job that's usually very rewarding but also demanding. Most of the students are good kids, though there are a few troublemakers. Last year I had particular problems with Alex Jones. He was very confrontational and defensive, even when he was caught vandalizing school property. I did notice that, toward the end of the year, he was behaving better.

On the first day of the new school year, I was checking lockers, and I noticed one locker was partially open. I checked the list of locker assignments, and I saw it was Alex's locker. It looked like the backpack was keeping the door from closing completely. I opened the locker to adjust the backpack correctly when I noticed a medication bottle poking out of the backpack. Upon further inspection I noticed it was a painkiller that is on the list of

controlled substances that must be kept only in the nurse's office, per school policy.

I was perfectly within my rights to confiscate this substance and alert Principal Sanders. She then took Alex from the schoolwide opening assembly, which made Alex very upset. He explained about his injury over the summer and that he had tried to give the new nurse the medication, but he was unable to find her. He should have taken the step of dropping off at the main office and speaking with the principal, an administrative assistant, or even me about the medication. I'm sorry that Alex feels that he was singled out, but he should have been more responsible about a substance that he knew was restricted in the school.

### ***Testimony of Bejon Sanders***

My name is Bejon Sanders, and I've been the principal of Anderson Middle School for the past 13 years. I have to say that in all my years, Alex Jones has been one of the most challenging students we've ever had. Even from his first year here, he was part of a group that would vandalize bathrooms, damage school property, and disrupt classes. I don't think he's malicious. He's just very impulsive. Towards the end of last year, though, I did notice a change. He was spending his time with a different group of friends, and he seemed to be making an active effort to make good choices. I really thought he was turning things around.

On the first day of the current school year, our security guard, Howard Ling, told me he found a painkiller in Alex's locker. He had been checking lockers and Alex's had been partially open; his backpack was keeping the door from completely closing. The bottle of painkillers was clearly visible when the locker was opened. As per school policy, Howard immediately notified me of what he found. In the past, we've had a drug problem, although Alex had never been part of it. We've had to take a zero-tolerance policy toward controlled substances. Because of that

policy, I was obligated to confiscate his medicine and to alert the police.

Alex explained to me, tearfully, that he had tried to drop the medication off with the nurse first thing in the morning. However, over the summer we lost our nurse, and until we hire a full-time replacement, we have to share the nurse with the adjacent elementary school. It just so happened that the middle school nurse's office was not covered when Alex stopped by.

I realize that some students need painkiller medication for injuries. But there is a protocol that students and their families must follow for medications to be allowed in the school. The nurse and the administration should have been notified in advance. I understand that Alex's injury happened late in the summer, but he and his family still needed to contact us.

The opening of the locker was permitted under legal precedent and did not violate Alex's Fourth Amendment rights. I do sympathize with Alex, and I'm sorry if he feels that he was accused solely because of his past bad behavior. But I can't allow illegal substances on school grounds. I feel that I acted fully within school policy and the law.

## **INSTRUCTIONS**

The plaintiff must prove by a preponderance of the evidence that the administration of Anderson Middle School violated Alex's Fourth Amendment rights.

## **SUB-ISSUES**

1. Should Alex or Charlie Jones have contacted the office of the middle school before the first day to alert them of Alex's medication?
2. Should there have been someone in the nurse's office on the first day of school?
3. Was Alex careless in placing the medication in his backpack, or should he have made certain it was secure and out of sight?

4. Was Alex careless in closing the door to his locker, given that anyone could open it and go through his backpack?
5. Did Howard Ling unfairly single out Alex because of his past behavior?
6. Was it necessary for Howard Ling to open the locker, or should he have just called Alex out to close it?

## **CONCEPTS**

1. Credibility of witnesses
2. Fourth Amendment
3. Burden of proof: preponderance of evidence

## **LAW**

The Fourth Amendment states: "The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated..." Precedent has determined that public school district officials may search students' lockers based upon reasonable suspicion.



# Double Trouble: Twyn Ay v. Pear Tech Company

***School***  
Frelinghuysen Middle

Morristown  
Grade 7  
Second Place

***Teacher***  
Veronica Pardo

***Students***  
Brianna Gumpper  
Ruby Kessler  
Samantha Meza  
Dina Varghese  
Keira Vasold

## FACTS

On May 7, 2024, Twyn Ay, a software developer, was at her job at the Pear Tech company building. At about 5:45 p.m., after a meeting at the end of the day, Twyn unintentionally left her bag in the meeting room. While Bos E. Bozz, the CEO of Pear Tech, was cleaning up, he discovered the bag left in the meeting room. Sticking out of the bag was a lanyard from Kiwi Corp, a competitor of Pear Tech. One of Pear Tech's policies prohibits employees from working with rival companies. After finding the lanyard, Bos E. pulled out the ID, recognized the face on the ID as Twyn Ay, and assumed she had a connection to Kiwi Corp. He stuffed the ID in his pocket and immediately reported the matter to Twyn's manager, Mrs. Manny Jer.

As a result, Bos E. Bozz and Mrs. Manny Jer temporarily suspended Twyn Ay pending an investigation into her involvement with Kiwi Corp. At the end of their investigation, they found that the ID belonged to Twyn's twin sister, who worked at Kiwi Corp, and not Twyn. Once they clarified the misunderstanding, Twyn was allowed back to work after being suspended for two weeks. During her suspension, Twyn missed important presentations and meetings, and her leave was unpaid.

Twyn Ay is now filing a suit against Pear Tech claiming that she wouldn't have been suspended if Bos E. Bozz had not looked through her bag without permission, and that they violated her Fourth Amendment rights. Twyn Ay is seeking back pay for the time she was suspended, as well as a formal apology from Pear Tech for her unjust suspension based on an unlawful search.

## ISSUE

Did Pear Tech Company violate Twyn Ay's Fourth Amendment rights when Bos E. Bozz looked through Twyn Ay's bag without consent?

## WITNESSES

### *For the Plaintiff*

Twyn Ay  
Sis Terbee

### *For the Defense*

Bos E. Bozz  
Manny Jer

## WITNESS STATEMENTS

### *Testimony of Twyn Ay*

My name is Twyn Ay, and I work at Pear Tech, a technology company, as a software developer. I am 30 years old and have been working there for eight years. I work hard and have a good relationship with my boss, who I believe trusts me. Anyway, on the morning of May 7, 2024, I was getting ready to go to work. My sister had stayed over the previous night. She looks similar to me, although her hair is a bit curlier. I got ready for work, grabbed my bag, and left to go to the Pear Tech building. Throughout the workday, I was doing my usual work and going to my usual meetings. After a meeting with my boss, I accidentally left my bag in the meeting room. I realized my mistake when I was leaving the building at the end of the day, and I quickly went back to grab it.

Later that evening, I was shocked to receive an email from my manager, Mrs. Manny Jer, notifying me that I had been suspended until further notice due to a violation of company policy for my relations with competitors. I knew that I had agreed to that policy, but I had nothing to do with the competitors. Furthermore, the email stated that I would not be paid during my suspension. I did not have any other jobs, so I was very worried because I did not know how I would be able to sustain myself for an unknown amount of time.

I immediately called my sister, feeling confused and upset, wondering what had happened. She went silent and then explained to me that she accidentally put her Kiwi Corp ID in my bag. She didn't think

that it was a big deal at the time because it was in my bag and she planned to come to pick it up the next day. My sister works at Kiwi Corp, which is our competitor. This explained why my company was so concerned. Bos E. Bozz must have seen her ID by looking through my bag without my consent. Bos E. Bozz and Mrs. Manny Jer must have thought that I was working for the competitor because we look alike. This was totally not fair!

This was an invasion of privacy and a violation of my Fourth Amendment rights. I expected that my personal belongings would be respected at work, and the search was without my knowledge. They suspended me because they had to conduct a formal investigation to check if I was working with the competitor or not. The investigation is common practice, but this would never have happened, and I wouldn't have been suspended or investigated if Bos E. Bozz hadn't violated my Fourth Amendment right by looking through my bag without my consent. During my wrongful suspension, I missed important meetings and I'm now behind on some assignments. I also didn't get paid and I was late paying some of my bills. I am seeking justice through back pay for the time I was suspended, as well as a formal apology from Pear Tech for violating my rights and mishandling the situation.

### ***Testimony of Sis Terbee***

My name is Sis Terbee and I am Twyn Ay's sister. I work as a security device developer at Kiwi Corp, and I have worked there for six years. On May 7, 2024, I was in my sister's kitchen making breakfast before I went to work. I stayed overnight at my sister's house. Since I was not in my own house, my belongings were everywhere, causing me to lose track of things and be very rushed. I made my breakfast as fast as I could, slipped my lanyard into my bag, went upstairs to get my shoes, put my bag on, and rushed to my car. Once I got to Kiwi Corp, I looked through my bag for my lanyard so I could get into the

building, but I couldn't find it. I then realized my mistake - I put it in the wrong bag. I didn't think much of it since I could use the Kiwi Corp app to access the building. I didn't need my badge for the remainder of the day.

Later that day my sister called me, she was upset and crying. On the phone call, she told me she got suspended because of violating company policy, but she didn't know why. I felt so bad and hesitantly told her that I accidentally put my Kiwi Corp lanyard in her bag. She was furious because the second lanyard wasn't even hers, it was mine. I thought that it was my fault until she told me that Bos. E Bozz looked through her bag without her consent.

I talked to my sister, and she said she is suing the company because she feels that her Fourth Amendment rights were violated. I completely agree with her. She was not paid and is now overwhelmed because of all the meetings she missed. No one should have their personal belongings searched without permission. I think it was unfair that they looked through her bag. Twyn is a good employee and has never done anything wrong for them. I understand that I work at the rival company, Kiwi Corp, but she is an honest worker, and she's worked there for so long. I find it hard to believe that Pear Tech would treat her this way over a simple mistake. I don't know why they wouldn't trust her.

### ***Testimony of Bos E. Bozz***

My name is Bos E. Bozz and I am the founder and CEO of Pear Tech. I have been leading the company for 14 years. I take my job very seriously and always try to strive for success. One of my main priorities is ensuring that all employees follow our company policies. On May 7, 2024, after a meeting, I stayed behind to clean up when I saw a bag left on the meeting table. I went to get the bag when I noticed a lanyard with the Kiwi Corp logo sticking out. Kiwi Corp is a direct competitor of Pear Tech. We have been rivals

for as long as I can remember and have had some issues in the past. We have clear company policies regarding Kiwi Corp, and no employee should have any connection with the company. I opened the bag and took out the lanyard when I saw Twyn's face on the lanyard. This caused me to be even more furious. I considered Twyn Ay a loyal and trustworthy employee, but this was a clear violation of company policies by working at Kiwi Corp. I immediately took the lanyard and ID and went to discuss this situation with her manager, Mrs. Manny Jer. We decided that Twyn Ay would be temporarily suspended until we could investigate further.

I did not intend to violate Twyn's privacy, and I only took the lanyard from her bag because the policy violation was very serious. While Twyn was on her suspension, we figured out that the lanyard belonged to Twyn's identical twin sister. We apologized to Twyn and brought her back to work after her suspension. However, Twyn was infuriated and filed a lawsuit against Pear Tech, claiming that we violated her Fourth Amendment rights. I didn't know who the bag belonged to, and I take company policies very seriously. While I understand her frustration over the suspension, I want to emphasize that I believed I was acting in the best interest of the company.

### ***Testimony of Manny Jer***

My name is Manny Jer, and I am the manager of software development for Pear Tech Company. I have been working for Pear Tech for 11 years. I care a lot about my workers and make sure I do the best for them. My role involves overseeing staff and ensuring that company policies are followed.

On the evening of May 7, 2024, Bos E. Bozz came to me with a lanyard. I examined the lanyard and was shocked to see the green kiwi logo pasted on it. Kiwi Corp is one of Pear Tech's main competitors. The lanyard appeared to have Twyn Ay's face on it. I was infuriated and extremely concerned. I never

would have thought that Twyn would have been working for our rival company, Kiwi Corp.

This was extremely unacceptable, considering our strict company policy. Kiwi Corp has been our rivals for years and years and all our workers know that. Punishment was necessary. After Bos and I discussed the situation, we decided to suspend her until we investigated the situation. Yes, Twyn was a very good employee, but this was very wrong. We investigated the case for the next two weeks. We soon found out that the lanyard for Kiwi Corp that we had found in Twyn's bag belonged to her identical sister, Sis. We ended Twyn's suspension and let her come back to work.

She was extremely angry at Bos and me. Twyn later sued Pear Tech. She claimed that if we never looked through her bag, she never would have been suspended from work. While I understand that she is very upset, it's my job and responsibility to ensure company policy is followed.

## **INSTRUCTIONS**

The plaintiff must prove by a preponderance of the evidence that her constitutional protection against illegal search and seizure was violated when Bos E. Bozz searched through Twyn Ay's bag without consent.

## **SUB-ISSUES**

1. Did Bos E. Bozz have the right to go through Twyn Ay's bag without her knowing?
2. Did Bos E. Bozz have the right to suspend Twyn Ay using the evidence from her bag?
3. Did Bos E. Bozz overreact when he found the Kiwi Corp badge?
4. Was Twyn Ay violating company policy because she had a relationship with a rival company?

## **CONCEPTS**

1. Preponderance of the evidence
2. Fourth Amendment

## **LAW**

The Constitution, through the Fourth Amendment, protects people from unreasonable searches and seizures by the government. The Fourth Amendment, however, is not a guarantee against all searches and seizures, but only those that are deemed unreasonable under the law.

Pear Tech Policy #09: Non-Association with Competitors - Employees are prohibited from directly associating with competitors or rival companies that provide products or services in direct competition with Pear Tech during their employment.



# Natalie Brown v. Beechwood Prep

## ***School*** Shrewsbury Borough

Shrewsbury Borough  
Grade 7  
Honorable Mention

## ***Teacher***

William Clark

## ***Students***

Elizabeth Allora  
Felicity Hall  
Wren Hegner  
Evelyn Michel  
Evelyn Scutellaro

## Facts

Natalie Brown is an 18-year-old girl who attends Beechwood Prep. On February 16, 2023, she was at home when she searched for where to buy Coke on her home computer while logged in to her school Google account. Since this account was associated with the school, administrators can track the exact searches made and the times they were conducted. Certain words or phrases are flagged, and administration is alerted immediately. Given this information, the principal searched Natalie's personal belongings, including her locker, backpack, and computer.

The next day at school, Natalie was brought to the main office where Principal Pullman and the school resource officer searched her backpack. He found three ounces of marijuana from a local dispensary, which violates school policy against possession of substances. Natalie had a hearing with the discipline committee from which it was decided that she would be expelled for having marijuana on campus.

## ISSUE

The plaintiff claims she was unjustly searched and expelled based on wrongly interpreted evidence.

## WITNESSES

### *For the Plaintiff*

Natalie Brown  
Summer Dawson

### *For the Defense*

Principal Simone Pullman  
Officer Will Julian

## WITNESS STATEMENTS

### *Testimony of Natalie Brown*

My name is Natalie Brown. I used to be a student at Beechwood Prep. Though I have struggled with many at-home issues, I have maintained my excellent science grades. I was at home doing research for my science

project, in which we had to get different bottles of soda and put Mentos in them to see the reaction. I researched the cost of Coke on my school's Google account.

The next day I was sitting in ELA in first period. I was called into the hallway to find Principal Simone Pullman and the School Resource Officer Will Julian searching through my locker. They brought me to the office and asked me to hand over my backpack so it could be searched.

Earlier that morning, I caught my dad trying to go back to his old ways. My dad, Christopher Brown, had just been released from a rehab facility for alcohol and drug addicts. He was in several different rehabs over three years. He promised me afterward he would never go back.

I woke up and saw him passed out on the couch with the marijuana on the floor. I lost it. I couldn't handle it. He broke his promise, and I was angry. I grabbed it and threw the package in my backpack. I didn't know what I was going to do with them, but I couldn't leave it at home with him sitting there rotting on the couch.

That day, after searching my backpack, Principal Pullman found the marijuana that had been swiped from my dad that morning. I had no idea how much was in my backpack.

After calling home to my dad, he came and picked me up from school. He was livid. Not because I had brought drugs to school, not because I would most likely get expelled, not because he had broken his promise, but because I had taken his marijuana. I was suspended until further notice. For days I was stuck at home with my dad, and school was always my escape from him.

We got a call a few days later telling me that my hearing was going to be on February 24. I was scared. School was all I had, a way to escape from my home life. I just couldn't

get expelled.

I went to the hearing by myself. My dad refused to get out of bed. It was quick. There was nothing I could say to defend myself. They found drugs in my backpack, and I was expelled. It was horrible. I felt powerless.

### ***Testimony of Summer Dawson***

I am Summer Dawson. I have been Natalie's best friend since first grade. I have always tried to be considerate of her decisions because she had a lot going on at home. Her mother passed away when she was young, too young to be able to handle such a loss. And since then, her father hasn't been the best guardian. He has some serious drug problems which leads to Natalie sleeping over at my house most weekends. She also stayed with us several times when her father was in jail and rehab.

On February 16, our science teacher, Mrs. Ehlers, assigned us a project on the chemical reactions of different sodas. Natalie and I didn't have time to work on the project in class, so she took it home to work on it. To do the project, we had to record how Mentos reacted to Fanta, Sprite, and Coke. I found two of the sodas in my house. I asked if Natalie had any Coke and if not, if she could buy some because I had already supplied our group with two out of the three sodas. She said she would see what she could find or run to the store.

In terms of money, things had been very tight because her father was in and out of jail, and with all of the jail time that he's served, he would never be hired for a job. Natalie would usually never buy anything whenever our friends would go shopping and she could cover it up too with things like "I didn't find anything I liked" or "I am just going to come back to buy it." Most of the time, she would cover it all up, but if she ever did need the money, she couldn't rely on her dad, she would have to find a way to pay on her own.

All of these factors have drastically changed Natalie from the innocent, funny, and energetic girl I met in first grade to the secretive and reserved teenager who I am friends with now. In my opinion, no girl this young should have to deal with these heavy things that most adults mentally can't handle.

### ***Testimony of Principal Simone Pullman***

My name is Principal Pullman, and I have been a principal for 15 years at Beechwood Prep. I have always strongly enforced the school's drug policy and was very surprised when Natalie was found with cannabis. I know she hasn't always had the best home life, but I still expected better of her.

Natalie was always one of the best students and was bound to become the valedictorian. She flourished in science and was able to keep high marks in other subjects. No matter what was going on, I never saw a dip in any of her grades or mood.

On February 16, around 4:45 p.m., I received a notification that a student had looked up "Cost of Coke?" It was for Natalie Brown, whose father I knew had some problems, so I was worried she had taken after him. In my role as the principal, I receive many notifications from our internet security software regarding student searches and I usually brush them off, although this one in particular caught my eye.

The next day I called School Resource Officer Will Julian and asked him to help me take a look at Natalie's belongings. We went to her locker first. Inside we found nothing out of the ordinary. Just her usual school supplies and other necessities.

Since we didn't see her walk in, we took her out of class and down to the office to search her backpack. Inside we found around three ounces of cannabis in an open package from a local dispensary, her lunch and water, and a bottle of Coca-Cola with her science paper

wrapped around it.

We called her father in and immediately suspended her for having drugs on her person while in school. The following week the discipline committee had her hearing. Natalie claimed that the cannabis was not hers and she had only been looking for Coca-Cola when she made the Google search.

In the end, it was a hard decision, and I knew that Natalie had a hard home life, but ultimately, I think there are no excuses for the cannabis found in her possessions.

### ***Testimony of Officer Will Julian***

My name is Officer Will Julian. I have worked as the school resource officer for 10 years at the Beechwood Police Department. It is not uncommon for teens to sneak drugs, but this certainly is a complicated case. The morning of February 17, 2023, I received a call from Principal Pullman. She informed me that the previous night, at around 4:45 p.m., she received an alert saying that a student, Natalie Brown, had searched “Cost of Coke?” She requested that I pay a visit to the school to search Natalie’s possessions. I immediately rushed to the school and proceeded to search her locker. I did not find anything suspicious.

After that, Principal Pullman and I pulled her out of class to search her person and backpack. We found three ounces of cannabis, her lunch, water, and a bottle of Coca-Cola with her science paper wrapped around it.

Principal Pullman and I called Natalie’s father, and he came and picked her up from school. Principal Pullman and I had a long discussion after she left. I discovered that she had some problems at home. Her father has been in and out of various rehabs and jails for multiple years. We suspected that she had followed in her father’s footsteps by bringing the cannabis to school. About a week later she had her disciplinary hearing. It was hard to watch. I wasn’t the only one to notice this

girl came entirely alone. No parent, no supporters, no lawyer, just her, standing in front of this judge trying to defend herself.

She tried to argue that the marijuana wasn’t hers and that she meant Coca-Cola, not cocaine, but it didn’t matter. She had an illegal substance on school grounds.

## **INSTRUCTIONS**

The plaintiff must prove by a preponderance of evidence that Beechwood Prep searched her without probable cause and expelled her.

## **SUB-ISSUES**

1. Why did Natalie hold onto the cannabis instead of disposing of it immediately?
2. Should Natalie have been provided support for her at-home issues?
3. If Principal Pullman receives multiple notifications, why did she pay attention to this particular search?
4. Did Natalie’s at-home life influence the way Principal Pullman interpreted the word “Coke”?

## **CONCEPTS**

1. Search and seizure
2. Probable cause
3. Preponderance of evidence

## **LAW**

Fourth Amendment to the United States Constitution: The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

School Policy 5530 - SUBSTANCE ABUSE - Section E: Handling of Alcohol or Other Drugs. 1. A student’s person, effects, or school storage places may be searched for substances in accordance with Board Policy and applicable laws regarding searches in schools.



# **Solitary Sadness: Dalize v. Loneville Corrections Department**

***School***  
**Bunker Hill Middle**

Sewell  
Grade 8  
First Place

***Teacher***

Megan Heston-Merrill

***Students***

Anthony Cutrale Jr.  
Brody Edelman  
Mason Furman

Gavin Mazzi  
Jeffrey Orihel Jr.  
Lena Phomsavath

Madeline Rosenbaum  
Dean Sadowski

## FACTS

Vanessa “Van” Dalize was sentenced to four months in the Loneville Juvenile Detention Center after being found guilty of vandalizing a local church. Van, although always a good student, struggled in her social life. Her family made note of this and sought help from child psychologist Dr. Harold Shrink. During her stay within the facility, she was assigned to certain duties, which included kitchen duty, cleaning duty, and mandatory attendance in her assigned classes. Periodically, Van would refuse to do her assigned work, but she always maintained her grades. As a result of her refusal to do work and per Minnesota state law, she was placed in 10-day cycles of solitary confinement. This happened three times during her stay resulting in 30 non-consecutive days of solitary confinement.

Over time at Loneville Detention, she met with an assigned social worker, Sue Pervision, to supervise her progress and rehabilitation. The social worker made sure to check in with Van while in solitary confinement and reported no issues with her stays. However, those close to her noticed changes in her behavior, including increased isolation and disinterest in school, causing her grades to drop, something very unusual for Van. After her release, she could not integrate back into society, citing her inability to return to public school successfully.

Despite having a few check-ins with Dr. Shrink, Van’s decline in mental stability necessitated increased visits with him. Knowing her prior to this, Dr. Shrink made note of new behaviors after her time in solitary confinement, including avoiding social interactions, concentration deficits, and mood swings. All these factors greatly impacted her post-release, especially in school. Her lack of motivation and concentration caused her grades to drop, worrying her family about her future academic endeavors. In collaboration with

her school counselor, they decided the best way to support Van at this time was to send her to Turning Winds Academy, a Minnesota behavioral boarding school three hours from her house.

Turning Winds intends to correct her concentration gaps, raise her GPA and get her back on track to attend college. The parents of Vanessa Dalize are suing the Loneville Corrections Department for the cost of tuition at Turning Winds Academy, \$75,000 per year, for the two remaining years of high school. Her parents claim that the extensive period of 30 days in solitary confinement, 10 consecutive day periods each, was too much for the 15-year-old, while the facility claims to be following the Minnesota state guidelines for labor refusal.

## ISSUE

Did Loneville Corrections Department commit cruel and unusual punishment, and therefore, are they responsible for Ms. Dalize’s cost of tuition at Turning Winds Academy?

## WITNESSES

### *For the Plaintiff*

Dr. Harold Shrink  
Connie Vict

### *For the Defense*

Hank Cuffs  
Sue Pervision

## WITNESS STATEMENTS

### *Testimony of Dr. Harold Shrink*

I am a licensed clinical psychologist specializing in the treatment of juveniles. I have been treating Vanessa for about one year now. I was consulted by her parents shortly before she was sentenced when her delinquent behaviors, such as vandalism and misconduct within school, began to affect her overall stability. I was permitted to visit Vanessa twice a month while she was incarcerated and if our appointment had fallen on a day while she was in solitary

confinement, it would be postponed. When we would resume our sessions after her confinement, I saw signs of distress, and she would not verbalize her emotions as she had previously. Therefore, it is my expert opinion that her extended stays in solitary confinement caused her behavioral patterns such as withdrawal from social activities, difficulty concentrating in class, and significant mood swings, which were also noted by her school counselor. In recent sessions, I have continued to observe a decline in her mental health and lost progress due to the period of time she had spent in solitary confinement and the disruption to her schedule. Thus, I along with her school counselor thought her attendance at Turning Winds Academy was imperative to her success and getting her back on an academic track, ensuring long-term opportunity.

### ***Testimony of Connie Vict***

My name is Connie Vict, and I was Vanessa Dalize's cellmate at Loneville Juvenile Detention Center. We became close and our bond grew due to all the time we spent together. I found out we had most of our classes and many of our duties together. I noticed that prior to her time in solitary confinement, she was very talkative and loved to make jokes. She was also very good in our classes at juvie. She would always participate in class and usually get A's and B's, and she always helped with my assignments, too.

After her first period of 10 days in solitary confinement, there weren't any major changes I could notice other than the fact she wouldn't initiate as much conversation as before and her attitude had changed a bit. There were also some changes in her schoolwork, as her grades dropped to C's and one D. She turned in a few assignments late and rarely raised her hand or participated. When I asked her about her time in solitary, she would only say, "I don't want to talk about it."

After her second period of 10 days, it was like I was cellmates with a whole new person. The only thing she did when she came back from that sentence was lay in her bed all day; she didn't even say a word to me. She barely even talked to me, and I don't think she even laughed anymore. Her schoolwork also got worse. Her grades dropped to D's and two F's. She would sometimes not turn assignments in altogether. She never participated in class unless forced to, and after a while started to skip class, which led to her third 10-day service in solitary confinement. After her third period of solitary confinement, there weren't many changes except that she would start to break down and cry at random times. Van was one of my best friends, and it really hurt me to see her in such a terrible mood.

### ***Testimony of Hank Cuffs***

My name is Hank Cuffs, and I have been the warden of Loneville, Minnesota's juvenile detention center, for 14 years. When Vanessa first came to the facility, she was assigned to kitchen duty and given her class schedule. She cooperated with these arrangements for about a month until she began to show disdain towards our facility's guards. On June 3, 2023, she committed her first offense by refusing to complete her tasks during compulsory kitchen duty. After being warned multiple times, it was then the guards' judgment to place her into solitary confinement. She was given a 10-day isolation period to reflect on her offense—refusal of labor. During this period, we provided her with the basic necessities standard for isolated juveniles and authorized two visits with her social worker. This has been our procedure for decades and has proven effective on our disobedient and uncooperative juveniles.

After Vanessa was released, she returned to her cell, where she resumed her regular routine. Her time in isolation was productive for a brief period. However, her second offense took place on July 6, 2023. Vanessa failed to be present for her cleaning

duties and refused when asked by guards. She acknowledged that she would be sent to isolation for not following instructions, yet she seemed indifferent. Here, the same procedure was followed as last time. Her final offense occurred on August 1, 2023, about a month after the previous violation. Vanessa failed to attend any of her classes and refused when asked to by guards. Due to this, Vanessa was sent to solitary confinement for the final time. Reasonably, we checked on her twice during the first full day of confinement since it was her third 10-day period, but all mandatory procedures were followed. We had one last assessment done by her social worker, who ensured she was healthy.

### ***Testimony of Sue Pervision***

My name is Sue Pervision, and I have been providing social services at the Loneville Juvenile Detention Center for the past two years. I was first introduced to the plaintiff during her initial admission into LJDC. Despite her clear irritation, Vanessa was cooperative and willing to answer all of my questions. She had shown zero signs of mental instability, physical incompetence, or any intentions of reoffending. I therefore concluded that monthly visits would be most suitable during her time at the facility. The next time I saw Van was for her monthly consultation, which happened to be just a day or two before her first violation. During our session she was annoyed and, at times, was non-compliant while answering my questions. However, this is typical behavior for someone subjected to the drastic lifestyle changes that come with living at a detention center, especially during the initial adjustment period. Based on this analysis, I decided to continue with Van's monthly consultations.

It was soon brought to my attention that Van had been neglecting her duties. In these situations, Minnesota's standard procedure is to penalize the juvenile with 10 days of solitary confinement. Vanessa, being punished accordingly, was placed in solitary

confinement for the first time on June 3, 2023. She was placed in solitary confinement an additional two times after these offenses continued. During Van's time in solitary confinement, I visited her a total of seven times. All seven times, Van was able to calmly answer my questions and failed to exhibit any symptoms, mental or physical, that might indicate any underlying issues. During Van's time spent out of isolation, we continued with our monthly consultations where this behavior remained consistent for the remainder of her sentence. She was released with no diagnosis of any mental disorders.

### **INSTRUCTIONS**

The plaintiff, Vanessa Dalize, must prove by a preponderance of the evidence that the defendant, Loneville Corrections Department, inflicted cruel and unusual punishment which was the sole cause of Vanessa's mental instability that led to her attending the behavioral school Turning Winds Academy.

### **SUB-ISSUES**

1. Is any amount of time in solitary confinement cruel and unusual, especially for a juvenile?
2. Does a juvenile's mental development make solitary confinement more harmful?
3. Were there alternative disciplinary measures available that could have avoided the use of solitary confinement?
4. Should solitary confinement be considered rehabilitative?
5. Are the emotional impacts caused solely by solitary confinement?

### **CONCEPTS**

1. Cruel and unusual punishment
2. Preponderance of evidence
3. Credibility of the witnesses
4. Circumstantial evidence

## **LAW**

Minnesota Statutes 641.09 - For refusal to labor or obey necessary orders in reference thereto, a prisoner may be kept in solitary confinement but shall not be so confined more than 10 days for any one offense, nor more than 90 days in all.

The Eighth Amendment to the United States Constitution - Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishment inflicted.

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# Erikson v. Incandescent High School

***School***  
Clinton Township Middle  
Clinton  
Grade 8  
Second Place

***Teacher***  
Diane Cormican

***Students***

Olivia Hall  
Graham Henneman  
Hannah Ives  
Claire Jun

Jack Kappus  
Elijah Li  
Maxwell Lorcheim  
Julianne Magron

Brody Mathews  
Megan Olivo  
EunChae Song

## FACTS

On May 16, 2024, Brick Erikson was a senior at Incandescent High School in New Jersey. Brick was on track to graduate at the top of his class. He was offered a full four-year academic scholarship offer from Pricetown College.

Incandescent High School has a policy that students are not allowed to use their cell phones in class. The policy says: “Students may have a ‘silenced’ cell phone on their person. The use of these devices during instructional time without the permission of the teacher, or in a disruptive manner, is prohibited. Cell phones that ring, vibrate excessively, or in any other way disrupt the educational process are grounds for confiscation of the device by school staff.”

Any student in violation of this rule is subject to having their phone taken away and must meet with the principal to get it back. Some teachers have established a procedure to collect the phones during class, particularly on days where the students are participating in exams and have phone caddies set up for collection. The high school campus has a school resource officer, known as the SRO, who assists with teaching safety classes and keeping the school protected.

In biology class, students are required to place their phone in the cubbies near the teacher’s desk at the beginning of each class. On the day of the incident, the class was working on a test, and the teacher noticed a buzzing sound coming from one phone repeatedly. She called the main office to report the offense. The secretary sent the SRO down to the classroom to collect the disruptive phone. The officer met the teacher at the door of the classroom and left with the phone.

On her way down to the office, the SRO noticed the phone buzzing and looked at the screen. A text appeared that referred to the transfer of money. She noticed that the phone wasn’t password protected. She

clicked on the message and saw several text messages and Venmo confirmations. The SRO claims that these Venmo requests provided reasonable suspicion to search the contents of the phone. The SRO indicated that money transfers are a sign that the student may be involved in illegal activity. The SRO discovered a series of texts for essays, term papers, and even test answers.

The principal was informed of the findings by the SRO, and they launched an investigation into this case. The phone was identified as Brick Erikson’s. Incandescent High School has a strict policy concerning academic integrity, and the standard punishment is a two-week suspension.

The investigation was finalized on May 23, 2024, and Brick received a two-week suspension. His suspension fell during finals week, and he was unable to take his finals and graduate. He would not be allowed to take his exams until the end of the next semester, and he had to explain this to the college. Due to their academic integrity and finals policy, his scholarship at Pricetown College was revoked.

Brick and his mother are suing the high school for a violation of his rights to privacy under the Fourth Amendment. They claim that the school had no right to search Brick’s phone, and the school is liable for the loss of his scholarship, valuing \$200,000.

## ISSUE

The plaintiff claims that his Fourth Amendment rights were violated, causing him financial and academic harm.

## WITNESSES

### ***For the Plaintiff***

Brick Erikson  
Paige Lucas

### ***For the Defense***

Natalie Shaker  
Jonathan Cumberman

## **WITNESS STATEMENTS**

### ***Testimony of Brick Erikson***

I am Brick Erikson, and I am 18 years old. I have lived here all my life with my mom and three younger siblings. I am a serious student and work very hard to keep my grades up. I also help out my mom, who works three jobs in order to support us since our dad left. I do well in school, and I tutor other kids to make a little extra money on the side. I have even tutored Stephen Shaker, whose mother is testifying against me.

Over my four years at Incandescent High School, I've developed a very clean and studied reputation. I've been an important member of our school's robotics team and became our team leader in my junior year. Under my leadership, we've won two first-place titles in our state. I've also been on a high honor roll. Because of my hard work, I won an academic scholarship to Pricetown College, which is a prestigious private school. There is no way that I could go to college without a scholarship, so this was a big deal for me.

On May 16, I was in 3rd period biology and we had a test. Before the test began, I put my phone in the holder that our teacher had set up on her desk. It was very quiet, and I was very focused on my test, so I didn't see anything that happened. At the end of class I went to grab my phone, and I realized that it wasn't there. I asked the teacher, and she told me to go to the main office. This is where the principal and the SRO confronted me about some Venmo payments and asked what I was selling. I told them that those were payments for regular tutoring, but then there were some texts that revealed wrongdoing, asking me for test answers. I had still been stripped of my rights, and the search of my phone was a violation of my Fourth Amendment right to privacy!

I now see that I made a bad choice, but it began very innocently. Last year a student that I was tutoring asked if I could edit his

term paper, and I fixed it for him. He got an A and was so happy that he gave me a hundred dollars! Word got out, and I started helping other kids, too. I felt a little uneasy at first but discovered that I could add a disclaimer and tell the kids that the paper should be used as a guide only and they needed to write their own papers. I was so happy to be able to help my mom out and buy some nice things for my family and me. It was hard to resist the money. My phone was searched, and now my life is ruined.

### ***Testimony of Paige Lucas***

My name is Paige Lucas. I am 63 years old and a retired high school teacher. After I left teaching, I decided to become a college advisor, which I have been at for six years. I advise high school students about college choice and admissions. I also help them prepare for big tests like the SATs and ACTs, improve their college essays, guide them through the application process, and prepare them for admission interviews.

I have been working with Brick for a little over a year trying to make sure that he gets the best path into the colleges he wants. I don't take a lot of students, but Brick Erickson is an outstanding student. His grades are excellent, and he is also fun, kind, and humorous. He decided on a private college, Pricetown. Brick had to work very hard, spending hours studying and preparing for the SAT test. When he found out that he was accepted to Pricetown on a full academic scholarship, we were both thrilled. He would be able to get the education he deserved.

However, the school revoked his scholarship once they found out that he had missed finals because of a suspension for cheating. When we learned about this, we were crushed as this was his dream school that we have been working towards.

Brick has been tutoring other students since middle school, and he does odd jobs around town to help out his family. Venmo payments

are not cause for reasonable suspicion of illegal activity. Both the principal and the SRO know that Brick is a well-respected tutor and is paid for those services. The school went through his phone without consent or without probable cause as stated in the student handbook. The principal and the SRO had no right to search Brick's phone and derail his life and academic future.

### ***Testimony of Natalie Shaker***

My name is Natalie Shaker, and I work as a school resource officer at Incandescent High School. My job requires me to create a safe environment for every student. On a daily basis I like to interact with the students and make them feel like they can come to me with their issues and hopefully I can help out.

I also teach a class at Incandescent High school. Brick Erikson is a student in my safety class. I personally think he is a good and smart young man. I have to do my job in making Incandescent High School an environment that is safe and welcoming. On May 16, 2024, I was called down by the school secretary to go to Mrs. Smith's classroom to confiscate a phone. I walked in the classroom, and she handed me the phone. She explained that the phone was a major distraction to the students taking the exam. I did not want to be an additional issue to the students taking the test, so I left as quickly as possible.

On the way back to the office, the phone started buzzing continuously and would not stop. I wanted to power down the phone to limit the distractions. I was about to proceed to do so until I saw what the notifications were. There were online payments coming in along with messages. I instantly suspected the owner of the phone to be potentially selling drugs. I had no idea who the phone belonged to.

As I said before, my job is to keep everyone in this school safe. According to my handbook, if I think something is unsafe, I

have the right to start an investigation. The phone was unlocked, and I started to search it to prevent any harm. After reading the texts that appeared on the lock screen, I thought the principal should be aware of this situation as soon as possible. Even though the Fourth Amendment protects people's property from unreasonable searches and seizures, it also states that searches and seizures are allowed upon probable cause. I had reasonable suspicion to search the phone as I had a reasonable suspicion about it.

### ***Testimony of Jonathan Cumberman***

My name is Jonathan Cumberman. I am 57 years old, and I have been a principal for 15 years. I started out as a history teacher and got promoted to be the principal of Incandescent High School.

Our school has very strict rules about cheating. We, as a school, believe in academic integrity and honesty. This is exceptionally clear in our handbook. In our handbook it states, "Cell phones that ring, vibrate excessively, or in any other way disrupt the educational process are grounds for confiscation of the device by school staff."

On May 16, 2024, my secretary responded to a call from the biology teacher and sent Natalie Shaker, the school's resource officer. Mrs. Smith had informed Officer Shaker that a student's phone was continuously buzzing during a test.

After Officer Shaker confiscated the phone, she opened it to see what Mr. Erikson was looking at, suspecting him of drugs. The school resource officer gave the phone to me, without password protection.

The phone contains many texts and cash alerts. It was soon discovered that Brick was charging \$30 per a set of test answers and \$50 per page of approximately 250 words. If the student who was asking for the essay needed it in under two days, it would cost \$75. The students that sent the money were varied and

were not close friends of Mr. Erikson. On the other hand, Mr. Erikson has a clean record, which is why this whole situation is quite shocking for the majority of our school's staff.

Mr. Erikson has always been a student that has had straight A's and earns very high grades. Mr. Erikson has tutored and helped many of his peers. Additionally, throughout the years, he has achieved many academic awards and high honor rolls. He is also a part of the Robotics Team and has been a captain for a few years now, leading the team to success. Mr. Erikson's teachers have always complimented and praised his behavior to other teachers and staff.

Nevertheless, the student's repercussions of this incident include missing finals, to prevent any further abuse that he may cause leading to the removal of his scholarship. Colleges are very strict about academic integrity and so he needs to be able to accept and acknowledge the consequences of his actions.

## INSTRUCTIONS

The plaintiff must prove by a preponderance of evidence that his Fourth Amendment right was violated when his phone was seized and searched, causing him financial and academic harm.

## SUB-ISSUES

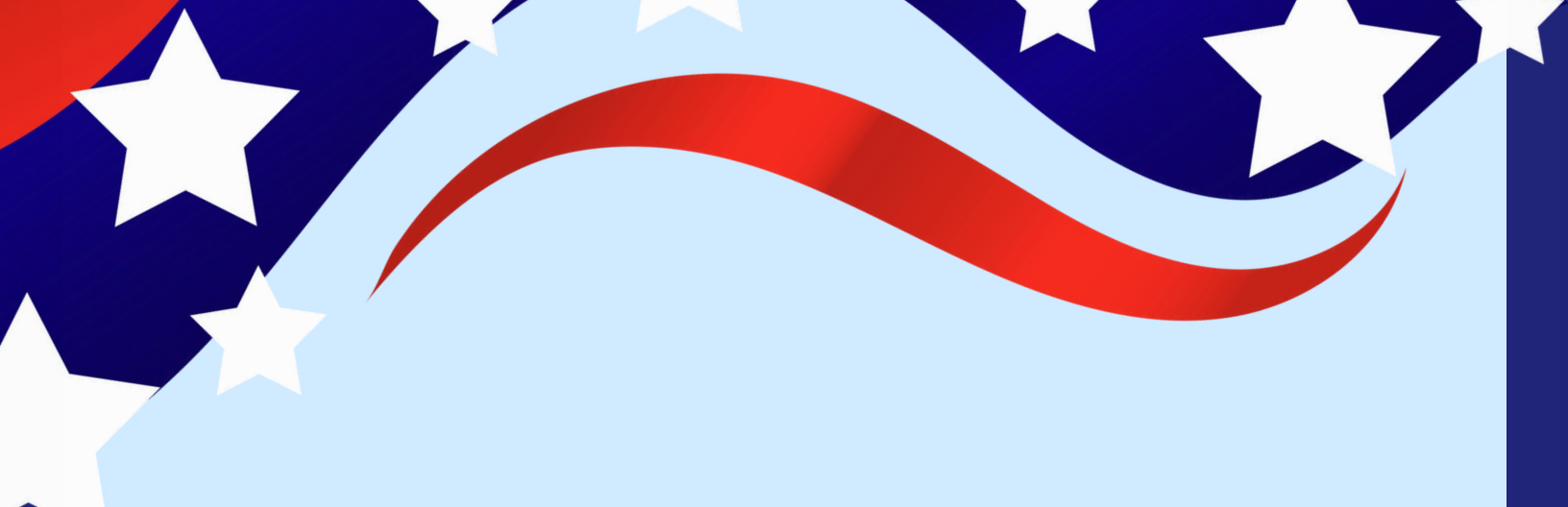
1. Why was Brick's phone not password protected?
2. Could the school have avoided Brick missing finals during his suspension?
3. If Brick was such a good student, why did he cheat?
4. Did the School Resource Officer have the right to search the phone?
5. How/why did the Pricetown College admissions decide to revoke his scholarship?

## CONCEPTS

1. Privacy
2. Reasonable suspicion
3. Academic integrity
4. Witness bias
5. Witness credibility

## LAW

1. The Fourth Amendment to the United States Constitution
2. New Jersey School Boards Association critical policy 5145.12 Search and Seizure: A pupil's person and possessions may be searched by a school official provided that the official has reasonable grounds to suspect that the search will turn up evidence that the pupil has violated or is violating either the law or the rules of the school. (Critical Policy Reference Manual)
3. 2009 New Jersey Code, TITLE 18A:2-3 – EDUCATION: No person shall, for any fee, or other remuneration, prepare, offer to prepare, cause to be prepared, sell or offer for sale any term paper, thesis, dissertation, essay, report or other written, recorded, pictorial, artistic or other assignment knowing, or under the circumstances having reason to know, that said assignment is intended for submission either in whole or substantial part under a student's name in fulfillment of the requirements for a degree, diploma, certificate, course or courses of study at any university, college, academy, school or other educational institution.
4. N.J. v. T.L.O. is a 1985 U.S. Supreme Court decision that originated in New Jersey. In the decision, the court ruled that schools should meet a "reasonableness" standard for searching and set the standards for student searches.



# **The Case of the Conceded Club: Anita Sue v. Belle E. Ver School District**

***School***  
Valley Middle  
Oakland  
Grade 8  
Honorable Mention

***Teacher***  
Jena Boomhower

***Students***  
Sofia Cosimano  
Christian de los Reyes  
Nia Krishnan

Matthew Nocella  
Juliana Paavola  
Gianna Valenti

## Facts

Farins Quaire, a student at Belle E. Ver High School, wanted to start a Muslim religious club at her school to spread her faith with other pupils. The two requirements to start a club at the school are that the club must have 10 students, and that the club must have a teacher advisor. Although Farins had found a teacher advisor, she was denied because she did not meet the school's required number of 10 students.

Later on in September, a group of Christian students, who had enough members, started their own club. This club was led by Anita Sue. The students asked Mr. Chris TeAniti to be their supervisor—a teacher who is a Christian believer and who just so happens to attend the same church as the students. While the Christian Club was in session at school, Farins Quaire walked by, taking a bathroom break from band practice, and claimed she saw Mr. TeAniti practicing with the students while they were in prayer. Farins Quaire said she saw him sitting at the table with his head bowed and hands crossed, moving his lips. The student went to the principal, Mr. Nomar Klubb, saying that she saw the teacher participating in religious activities with the students, and that teachers are not allowed to encourage a specific religion or participate in religious activities.

After weeks of no action, Mr. Klubb ended the club because he did not want any public controversy to start as to if the teacher participated or not. The parents of Anita Sue are suing the school for violating their daughter's First Amendment right of freedom to express her religion.

## ISSUE

Was the school district violating Anita Sue's First Amendment rights to practice religion when the club was canceled?

## WITNESSES

### *For the Plaintiff*

Chris TeAniti  
Anita Sue

### *For the Defense*

Nomar Klubb  
Farins Quaire

## WITNESS STATEMENTS

### *Testimony of Chris TeAniti*

My name is Chris TeAniti, otherwise known as Mr. TeAniti, and I am the ceramics teacher at Belle E. Ver High School. I was also the advisor for the Christian Club.

On Wednesday, October 9, 2024, I was asked by Anita Sue to be the advisor for the club they were trying to form. She told me that they had 17 students that wanted to join, which is above the required amount, and only needed an advisor to officially form. I also observe the religion of Christianity, and I attend the same church as most of the students, so I was more than happy to be the club advisor.

On October 21, 2024, I was minding my own business as the club advisor while the members began their first meeting with a prayer. I wanted to respect the children, so I closed my laptop and sat silently at the desk. I glanced to my left and briefly caught a glimpse of another student slowly walking past the door. She gave me a questioning look, then proceeded down the hallway. I ignored the situation in the hallway and closed the door in order to allow the children to continue in peace.

On Wednesday, October 23, 2024, I was approached by Mr. Nomar Klubb, the principal at Belle E. Ver High School. He informed me of a student who claimed that she saw me praying with the club members, which is not allowed. I immediately replied that I did no such thing and was gobsmacked that a student would accuse me of such actions. Mr. Klubb then informed me that

the club no longer was allowed to take place and should stop immediately. I was very disappointed with the news and was sad to know that the students could no longer grow their faith because of a silly misunderstanding.

### ***Testimony of Anita Sue***

My name is Anita Sue, and I am angry. I'm the founder of the Christian religious club, which is currently being suspended, at Belle E. Ver High School. I proposed an idea on October 7, 2024, to form a religious club for Christianity, as I know many of my peers also observe the religion. I felt that it would be a great addition to the school's extracurricular activities and help it feel more like a community.

Soon enough, we had 17 students willing to attend. This was more than the required number of 10 students. I was not aware that another student was hoping to start her own religious club, the Muslim Club, which eventually failed to form. The to-be members of the Christian Club sought out an advisor, as was required. Mr. TeAniti agreed to advise our club, as he also observes Christianity. At the time, I was not aware of the law about teachers not being able to practice religion with their students.

Our first meeting took place on Monday, October 21, 2024. We all began with a lengthy prayer, during which Mr. TeAniti sat in a prayer-like pose. I think he was trying to respect us while we prayed, not visibly taking part in it himself. While I was praying with my fellow Christians, I heard footsteps walking down the hallway near the classroom where our meeting was taking place. It sounded like they stopped right outside the classroom, and Mr. TeAniti looked in the direction of the door. Suddenly, the footsteps began again, this time at a more rapid pace than before. Mr. TeAniti got up and quietly closed the door, and that was the end of that. We proceeded with prayers, discussions, and finally closed the meeting

again with prayer.

A few days later, I was informed by Mr. TeAniti that the Christian Club was no longer allowed to meet. Apparently, he had been seen "praying" with us, which teachers are not allowed to do. The student in the hallway was the person who had tried to form the Muslim Club, and she then reported this action directly to the principal. Phone calls were made, school rule books were checked, and it was deemed that the club should be conceded. So now I'm here, my First Amendment rights to practice religion have been violated, and my parents are suing the school because of it.

### ***Testimony of Nomar Klubb***

I am Nomar Klubb, otherwise known as Mr. Klubb, the principal at Belle E. Ver High School in New Jersey. Our school is a diverse public school which includes many races and religions. At our school, we offer a variety of clubs in sports, crafts, and activities. Additionally, a student is allowed to create their own club, as long as it follows appropriate guidelines. The club must have at least 10 students and have a teacher advisor who will oversee it. Since clubs are student-run, the teacher should not partake in the club's activities but rather observe it.

In September, one of our students, Farins Quaire, was trying to form a Muslim Club. I told her it was okay as long as the club could meet the necessary requirements. She explained that she had found a teacher that was willing to supervise the club. Unfortunately, Farins could not find enough people to fill the 10-student minimum for the club.

In October, another student, Anita Sue, wanted to form a Christian Club at our school. Mr. TeAniti, our ceramics teacher, was willing to supervise the Christian Club. Anita also found 17 other students who wanted to join the club. Because the club met the requirements, it was allowed.

However, a few days later, Farins Quaire came into my office, very upset. She informed me that she saw Mr. TeAniti praying along with the students in the Christian Club. Farins mentioned how in our school handbook, it clearly states that a teacher cannot participate in the club. I promised to look into the situation.

I am a firm believer in the school rules and do my best to enforce them. After some contemplating over the situation, I decided that the Christian Club could no longer meet. Their club had breached the handbook rules, and I do not condone that.

### ***Testimony of Farins Quaire***

My name is Farins Quaire. I am a sophomore at Belle E. Ver High School. Before the school year began, I came up with a plan to begin a club. I wanted to bring my fellow Muslim peers together and grow our faith. Religion plays a large part in my life, and it influences my actions and values. I am aware that there are other students that attend Belle E. Ver High School who are Muslim, but do not have access to mosques or other religious buildings. For these reasons, I was excited to begin my club at the high school.

Unfortunately, my club idea was denied because it did not meet the required number of 10 students. This proposition discouraged me. Nevertheless, I continued on with my life. I am also a participant in the school band, and I enjoy this extracurricular activity very much.

On one particular October afternoon, just weeks after my club was canceled, I was at band practice after school. I needed to go to the bathroom, so I asked our teacher if I could. Once I was able to, I walked down the hallway and heard another club going on. I looked into the classroom to see and saw the club's advisor, Mr. TeAniti, with his head down and his hands crossed. The rest of the students were also participating in these actions. I interpreted it as they were praying,

because the students were saying different words that I could not hear. Mr. TeAniti's mouth was also moving back and forth, and I knew he was partaking in the prayer. This had me at a loss for words. Since when were club advisors allowed to participate? I immediately found this suspicious because the school handbook states that "Religious groups must be student-run, and their message may not be endorsed or sponsored by the school or its employees." The actions of Mr. TeAniti broke this rule, and I'm here to do something about it.

After this whole catastrophe went down, I went to the principal's office. Once I arrived there, I explained the whole situation that I had witnessed. Mr. Klubb claimed that he would "look into it." I left, satisfied that something would be done about this incident.

## **INSTRUCTIONS**

The plaintiff must prove by a preponderance of the evidence that Belle E. Ver School District violated Anita Sue's First Amendment rights by cancelling the after-school Christian Club.

## **SUB-ISSUES**

1. Did Farins Quaire misinterpret what she claims to have seen?
2. Should Mr. TeAniti have been distancing himself from the students whilst they were praying?
3. Are the members of the club sticking up for Mr. TeAniti because they want to continue their club?

## **CONCEPTS**

1. Burden of proof: preponderance of the evidence
2. Credibility of witnesses

## LAW

First Amendment: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Law regarding teachers practicing religion: Schools that permit non-curriculum-related student clubs must also permit religious student groups to organize and use school facilities. Religious groups must be student-run, and their message may not be endorsed or sponsored by the school or its employees.

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# The Case of The Vexing Video: Johnson v. Robertson

## ***School***

Florence M. Gaudineer Middle

Springfield

Grade 8

Honorable Mention

## ***Teacher***

Sarah David

## ***Students***

Aryan Doshi

Bobby Evans

Angel Enriquez Vinalay

Emily Forte

Angelina Huber

Evan Lafazan

Alex Rubin

Matthew Solomon

Julianne Thomas

Jordan Vincent

Gabriella Voorhees

Sofia Zuckerman

## FACTS

On May 17, 2024, at John McCarthy High School, Dorothy Robertson was accused of creating a slanderous social media post using Paradot A.I. and circulating it on Gramster, a social media platform. Dorothy has always been a good person and a well-rounded student. She is the team captain of the girls' soccer team, the Lions, has over 150 volunteer hours, and is senior class president. She is also a straight-A student. The focus of her video was her soccer coach, Mr. Johnson. There have been rumors about Mr. Johnson's behavior towards females on his team. Mr. Johnson always complains that the boys are so much better and wishes he could coach them. He has always been upset that he lost out on coaching the boys' Lions team to Mrs. Dolores, who has coached the boys for five years. He complained that the only reason she got the job was because she was a woman, but she actually had three years more experience than Mr. Johnson.

During their qualifying playoff game, the score was tied when Mr. Johnson walked onto the field, interrupting Dorothy's penalty kick. After being singled out by her coach, the pressure was on and Dorothy missed the shot, losing the game for the Lions. After the game, during their pep talk, Mr. Johnson could be heard screaming at the girls, claiming that, "This is why I didn't want to coach girls! Girls are soft and dramatic, and they don't have what it takes to win!"

As the team captain, Dorothy was taken aback by these harsh words. In response, she went to work recreating the incident on Paradot A.I., on her school-issued computer. The deep fake video of Mr. Johnson's "pep talk" soon appeared on Gramster, a popular social media platform. It rapidly received 1,000 views, specifically after it was re-posted on the Lions Mom's Gramster page.

The next day at school, the principal called Mr. Johnson into his office and showed him the video, asking if it was accurate.

Mr. Johnson vehemently denied the accusations. A few hours later, Dorothy Robertson was accused of libel, slander, and defamation of character by Mr. Johnson. Dorothy claims that her use of A.I. is protected by freedom of expression and speech under the First Amendment.

## ISSUE

Is A.I. generated content constitutionally protected under the free speech/free expression clauses of the First Amendment?

## WITNESSES

### *For the Plaintiff*

Mr. Johnson  
Mr. Griffin

### *For the Defense*

Dorothy Robertson  
Mrs. Dolores

## WITNESS STATEMENTS

### *Testimony of Mr. Johnson*

I have been a volunteer coach at John McCarthy High for three years. I played soccer in high school and fell in love with it! All I wanted to do was give that magic to the next generation and inspire a new kind of sports players. The day before the fake video was released on the internet, the Lions lost a soccer game and I, as their coach, gave them a pep talk. I had told them, "You guys are soft on the field. Everyone says that girls don't have what it takes to win, and you're proving them right." The conversation that I had with the girls' soccer team was willfully misinterpreted by Dorothy Robertson, the captain of the Lions.

Dorothy's creation of the video has deeply ruined my reputation, credibility, and ability to go out and walk around the community because people now view me as a bad person. My neighbors are even calling me at home, yelling about how I mistreated my own team. Unfortunately, I've never had children of my own, and my students are the closest thing I have to that. I care about those girls and

would never do something to hurt them, and I feel as if my well-being is in danger because of Dorothy's actions. This video has been circulated all over the internet and will never go away. My name will always be associated with this sexist incident. How am I supposed to coach this team when every parent in the school despises me? This has really had a deep emotional and psychological impact on me.

### ***Testimony of Mr. Griffin***

I have worked with Mr. Johnson for three years, helping and watching him coach these girls. Prior to that, I worked with Mrs. Dolores, coaching the boys' team. Having worked with both coaches, I can attest to the fact that they have similar coaching styles. For example, after a game the boys lost, coach Dolores told them, "You need to start playing like men, not boys." Mr. Johnson can be a little temperamental, for instance, if a play goes wrong, he grows exasperated with the team and tries to redirect them. But the reality is that Mr. Johnson is only looking out for them and preparing them for the next level of coaching in college. He cares about each of our players and is only hard on them for motivational purposes. He wants these girls to succeed and grow, especially in sports.

As for his after-game pep talk, it was taken way out of context. This is Mr. Johnson's first incident with the girls, while he was under much stress and pressure during an intense game. He was not yelling at all; it was just his normal loud voice, and his intention was to get the girls to outwork the other team and prepare them for the rigor of college soccer. Mr. Johnson and I both noticed that the girls were not playing at their usual level during this particular game, and we hoped to get them back in their usual groove. Dorothy's serious actions have resulted in Mr. Johnson being placed on temporary leave. Her comments have damaged his reputation and will forever leave a stain on his record.

### ***Testimony of Dorothy Robertson***

After Mr. Johnson was reassigned to coach the girls' team, it quickly became apparent that he was resentful about the change. Mr. Johnson was hoping to get the role of head coach of the boys' team after the old coach, Mr. Jones, quit. However, a more experienced coach, Mrs. Dolores, swooped in and took the position.

Clearly, Mr. Johnson wanted to coach the boys over us and shows that he feels this way frequently. For example, at the start of practice, he makes us run drills for half an hour, while the boys would scrimmage and learn new plays. Maybe if we spent more time learning plays and less on drills, we could have a better chance of winning our games. He's always talking about how the boys have so much talent and that they need a good coach like him to harness it.

Just the other week, after we lost our game, Mr. Johnson started to scream at us, saying, "that we shouldn't be playing sports. That we were soft, dramatic, whiny, and had no chance of winning." Even during practices, he makes rude comments under his breath, constantly comparing us to the boys' team. The video I posted is just proof of this sexism. I was just using A.I. to express my opinions, which are clearly protected by the First Amendment. His behavior is getting really out of hand, and I felt like I had to stand up to it. This is my right as a student and as a citizen to express how I feel.

### ***Testimony of Mrs. Dolores***

I have been coaching boys' soccer teams for five years and even earned the title of County Coach of the Year. Mr. Johnson has always held a grudge against me. He thinks I only got the job because I am a woman, and the school has an affirmative action quota to fill. He wanted to coach the boys' soccer team, but I was selected instead, being the candidate with more experience.

When we practice indoors because of bad weather, I use the gym right next to Mr. Johnson's. I could often hear him yelling at the girls, saying things like, "Get with the program!" and "Learn how to play or don't play at all!" After the girls' big soccer rivalry game, I was in the gym practicing with my boys when one of my players approached me, with a clip on Gramster. I was surprised when I saw Mr. Johnson screaming at his team, "This is the reason I don't want to coach girls! They're dramatic, whiny, and soft!" This is not the appropriate behavior for a coach to motivate his players.

## INSTRUCTIONS

The plaintiff must prove by a preponderance of the evidence that the actions of Dorothy Robertson were conducted with malice and are considered libelous and slanderous to Mr. Johnson, which resulted in defaming his character.

## SUB-ISSUES

1. Was the creation of the deep fake video of Mr. Johnson using A.I. an act of libel/slander/defamation? Did it cause harm to the plaintiff's reputation, social standing, or emotional well-being?
2. Is it libel/slander if Mr. Johnson actually made the statement that was recreated in the deep fake A.I. video?
3. Does Dorothy's video present an interpretation of events (i.e., her opinion) or does it represent factual statements made by Mr. Johnson?
4. Is A.I. a tool or separate entity? Can Dorothy be held responsible for something created by an algorithm?
5. Does the viral nature of the video exacerbate the damage to Mr. Johnson's reputation?
6. Does the intended audience of the video (the local community group on Gramster) make the video more detrimental to Mr. Johnson's reputation?
7. Are Mr. Johnson's statements protected under the First Amendment?
8. Does the school have a policy regarding

the use of A.I. on school devices?

9. Did Dorothy's actions violate the school's AUP policy?
10. Do artificial intelligence programs have First Amendment rights? Is A.I. content treated the same as human-generated content in terms of free speech?

## CONCEPTS

1. Preponderance of the evidence.
2. "Protected speech" vs. unlawful conduct (defamation/libel/slander)
3. First Amendment (Freedom of Speech/Expression)
4. Key Elements to Prove Defamation include: A false statement, that the statement was made to a third party, the statement caused harm to the reputation of the plaintiff, the statement was made with a degree of fault (negligence or actual malice, depending on the context).
5. Truth as a Defense to Defamation
6. Actual Malice (for Public Figures)-In defamation cases involving public figures actual malice must be proven. This means that the defendant either knew the statement was false or acted with reckless disregard for the truth.
7. Artificial Intelligence and A.I.-generated Content
8. School Policies and Regulation of A.I. on School Devices
9. Viral Social Media Impact

## LAW

First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution guarantees individuals the right to freedom of speech, which includes both the right to express ideas and the right to criticize or protest government actions and by extension government officials.

## Limits to free speech include:

- **Libel:** Defamation through written or published statements (e.g., online posts, written materials).
- **Slander:** Defamation through spoken or non-permanent forms of communication.
- **Precedent:** *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan* (1964) is a U.S. Supreme Court case that established the “actual malice” standard for defamation cases involving public figures. The Supreme Court ruled in a unanimous decision that public officials (and, by extension, public figures) could not win a defamation lawsuit unless they could prove that the defamatory statements were made with “actual malice.” This meant showing that the statements were made with knowledge of their falsity or with reckless disregard for whether they were true or false.
- **School AUP Policy:** This Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) outlines the expectations for the use of the school’s technology resources, including computers, networks, and the internet. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all students and staff use technology responsibly, ethically, and in a way that supports the educational goals of the school.

### 1. General Guidelines

- **Responsible Use:** All users are expected to act responsibly, follow the guidelines outlined in this policy, and use school devices and networks in a safe and productive manner.
- **Monitoring:** The school reserves the right to monitor all activity on its network and devices to ensure compliance with this policy.

### 2. Prohibited Uses

The following activities are strictly prohibited:

- **Inappropriate Content:** Accessing or sharing offensive, obscene, or inappropriate content.
- **Illegal Activities:** Engaging in illegal activities such as hacking, unauthorized access to systems, or violating copyright laws.

- **Cyberbullying:** Using technology to harass, intimidate, or threaten others is prohibited.
- **Non-Educational Use:** Using school technology for personal entertainment (e.g., gaming, social media, or excessive streaming) during instructional time.

### 3. Responsible Device and Network Use

- **Device Care:** Users must handle school devices (laptops, tablets, etc.) with care, ensuring they are protected from damage, loss, or theft.
- **Internet Safety:** Users should take precautions to avoid exposing personal information online and should report any suspicious or inappropriate online behavior to a teacher or administrator.
- **Network Access:** Users are expected to access the internet in a responsible and ethical manner. The school’s internet connection should not be used for personal business or to access sites that disrupt the learning environment.

### 4. Digital Citizenship

- **Respect:** Treat others with respect in all online communications and interactions. Follow good digital etiquette.
- **Collaboration:** Use technology tools to collaborate with peers and teachers in a positive and productive way. Respect the work and intellectual property of others.
- **Privacy:** Users should respect the privacy of others and not share someone else’s personal information without consent.

### 5. Consequences for Violations

- Failure to comply with this Acceptable Use Policy may result in disciplinary actions, including but not limited to:
- Temporary or permanent loss of access to school technology resources.
- Detention, suspension, or other disciplinary actions in accordance with school policy.
- Legal consequences for violations of local, state, or federal law.



# The Not So Dandy Times: Edward U. Cayshun v. Wood Ridge High School

## ***School***

Glen Rock Middle

Glen Rock

Grade 8

Honorable Mention

## ***Teacher***

Jessica Fishbeyn

## ***Students***

Caden Foley

Frederick Hamble

Tyler Tseng

Arjun Yuvaraj

Adrian Zislis

## FACTS

Edward U. Cayshun, a sophomore who attends Wood Ridge High School, distributed a newspaper entitled *The Dandy Times*.

Edward was the founder of the newspaper and released a new issue every week. Though his school doesn't officially recognize the paper, it is still popular among the students. Most students utilize the weekly paper as a source for current events that take place around the globe and in their school community.

In the most recent edition, published on December 9, 2024, one of the newspaper's weekly columns entitled "Behind the Student Lens: Life at Wood Ridge High School," claimed that an English teacher, Quest N. Bole, was racist towards a student named Ty Wahn. The column stated that Ms. Bole unfairly deducted points from Ty Wahn's assignments. Ms. Bole believes she graded fairly without racial bias.

On December 17, when the principal of the school, Yu R. Rong, reviewed the article, she threatened Edward U. Cayshun with suspension. The teacher and principal believe that the article isn't supported by substantial evidence, is defaming, and spreads misinformation.

When Edward did not take the article down, he was suspended. Edward is suing the school and is requesting monetary compensation for the wrongful suspension along with the violation of his First Amendment rights. He believes that his paper is independent of the school. Therefore, the newspaper is not subject to their authority.

## ISSUE

Can Edward U. Cayshun be suspended for publishing a paper that is independent of the school?

## WITNESSES

### ***For The Plaintiff***

Edward U. Cayshun  
Tyler Wahn

### ***For The Defense***

Quest N. Bole  
Yu R. Rong

## WITNESS STATEMENTS

### ***Testimony of Edward U. Cayshun***

Near the end of my freshman year at Wood Ridge High School, I founded *The Dandy Times*. It was independent of the school. I made it for fun and as an extracurricular activity to include when applying for college. It allowed me to improve my writing skills and keep my fellow classmates updated on news.

A few days before I wrote the article regarding Ms. Bole, I heard rumors about the popular English teacher being racist to a good friend of mine, Ty Wahn. As a young journalist and a friend, I felt it was my responsibility to ensure his voice was heard. I interviewed my friend. He stated that he was feeling victimized as Ms. Bole was often apathetic about Taiwan, his home country. Furthermore, he believed this affected his grades.

The following day, I wrote the article. I trust Ty Wahn and do not think he would lie, but I did not want my article to seem biased or not factual. Therefore, I only included Ty's direct quotes and stated these are only accusations.

The day after I published my weekly edition, Yu R. Rong, our principal, called me to her office during math class. She stated that the article jeopardized Ms. Bole's reputation and was written without substantial evidence. However, I felt that as a student-journalist I didn't have the resources or the time to cultivate a perfect newspaper. Furthermore, it was specifically stated that the accusations had not been proven true in my article. This is outrageous and a clear violation of my First

Amendment rights. They are restricting my speech and not allowing freedom of the press. Why should I be punished for sharing the beliefs of a fellow student?

### **Testimony of Tyler Wahn**

My name is Ty Wahn. I attend Wood Ridge High School with Edward, and I was the first to read *The Dandy Times*. Ed's writing was always thoughtful and honest, so all of the students enjoyed reading it. A popular feature of the paper was the column, "Behind the Student Lens: Life at Wood Ridge High School."

The first time I noticed something wrong with my grades, I consulted Ms. Bole about it. She claimed that because I was talking during class and my work was subpar, points were deducted from my assignment. I told her that I was having a bad day, and I just wanted to talk to my friend and apologized for my sloppy work. She said that she understood, and I thought that the issue was resolved. However, over time, it kept on happening, even after we "resolved" the issue. I worked harder, spent more time studying and perfecting my assignments, and I tried to refrain from talking to my friends.

Yet even after I had resolved things with Ms. Bole, my grades dropped. I felt confused. However, after I reflected on the past few classes, I began to realize that it wasn't me misbehaving in class. I noticed that Ms. Bole often chooses other students over me, and she often makes "jokes" about China and Taiwan. She made comments like, "Well, China makes everything." The various opinions she expressed began to make me feel uncomfortable.

When Ed offered to interview me for his newspaper, I decided to participate. I didn't think that it would turn into such an issue and that it would affect Ms. Bole's reputation. I simply shared my point of view of what happened. Moreover, the column serves the purpose of summarizing the views of a

student, not the teacher. Therefore, Ed found no reason to interview Ms. Bole. Additionally, the article was based on my words and my words alone. Ed did not add any embellishments to the words that I spoke.

### **Testimony of Quest N. Bole**

As a child of German immigrants who immigrated to the US right before World War II, I know what racism is. At work, my parents were called traitors and Nazis. In the sixties, when I was in school, children would bully me for being German. After my experiences, I would never be racist to another person. I would never change anyone's grades or call them names because of their race, nationality, or ethnicity. However, I do have grade penalties for misbehavior and sloppiness. Ty Wahn was misbehaving in class and was excessively talking to his friends this whole year. I warned him multiple times before I dropped his grade by a letter. I also had to drop his grade even more after he sent in an incomplete final essay.

This case has nothing to do with racism. If Tyler feels this way, I am always open to talking and solving the issue together. I understand that the column was meant to portray the students' perceptions of the events around them. However, the article was based on insufficient evidence. If the article was truly meant to be written without any bias, Ed would have interviewed me, not just Ty.

As an English teacher, I enjoy reading literary works written by my students and the weekly editions of *The Dandy Times* are something I look forward to every Monday. It hurts me to have to stop and ask Edward to take down his paper. It is extremely hurtful that a student who I have given nothing but respect to has purposefully lied and spread rumors defaming my image. I wish nothing more than the best for Ed and Ty. Next time, let's solve the problem together.

### **Testimony of Yu R. Rong**

As the principal of Wood Ridge High School who also happens to be an Asian American, I can confidently say that Quest N. Bole is a great teacher who has never made comments about my race. Ms. Bole is respected both among the students and staff here at our wonderful school. The article by Edward U. Cayshun made many assumptions about the teacher. For example, Edward never did any research and considered the other side; he just talked to Ty Wahn instead of talking to both Ms. Bole and Tyler. At WRHS, we encourage students to speak out against these issues. However, in the case of Edward, there could have been much better ways to express his opinions.

When I called Edward to my office, I gave him a clear warning and a second chance. I allowed him to take the paper down without repercussions. However, Edward stated that the newspaper wasn't tied to the school. Thus, it wasn't subjected to its authority. The issue was that the article being distributed in my school must be deemed school appropriate. The article spread misinformation and defamed one of our teachers, which is completely unacceptable.

### **INSTRUCTIONS**

The plaintiff, Edward U. Cayshun, must set out such a convincing case that the jury believes by a preponderance of the evidence that the defendant, Wood Ridge High School, unfairly punished Edward U. Cayshun for publishing his article. The plaintiff must also prove the article was not defamation.

### **SUB-ISSUES**

1. Is the school allowed to prohibit the distribution of *The Dandy Times* newspaper not tied to the school?
2. Was the latest edition of the column, "Behind The Student Lens: Life at Wood Ridge High," based on substantial evidence to serve its purpose of encapsulating student views?

3. Was Quest N. Bole racially biased towards Ty Wahn and his graded work?
4. Should Ty Wahn face consequences for spreading what seems to be misinformation?

### **CONCEPTS**

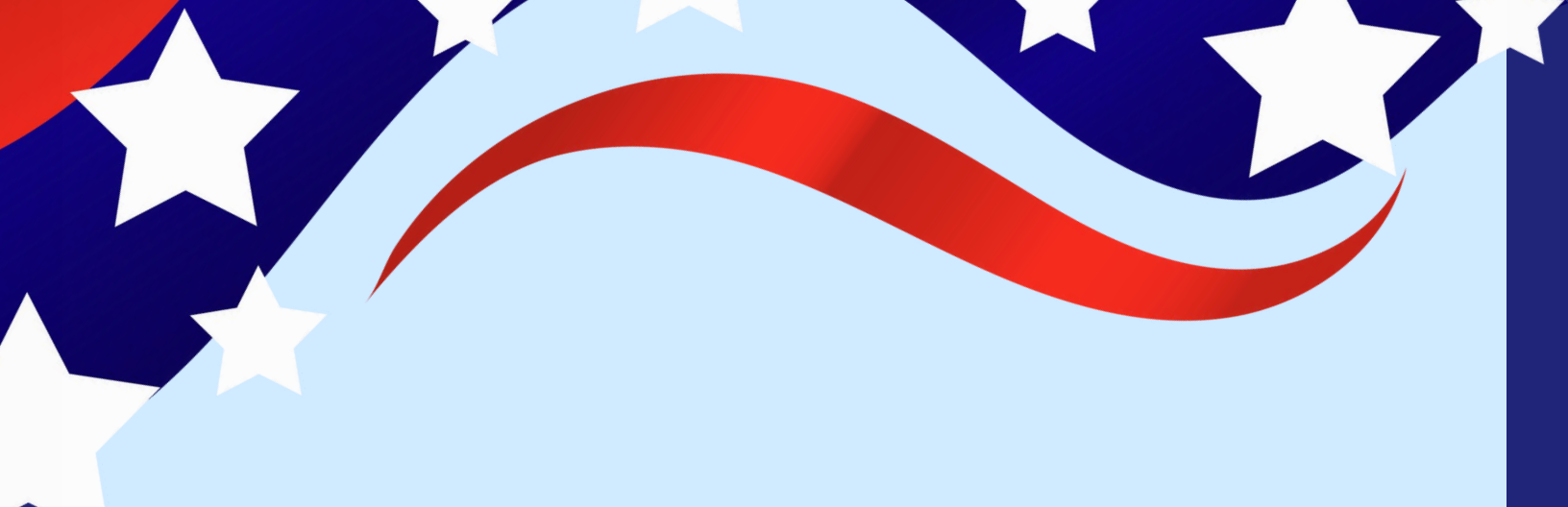
1. The burden of proof: preponderance of the evidence
2. Credibility of witnesses
3. Circumstantial evidence vs. direct proof
4. Defamation law
5. Rights of students in public schools

### **LAW**

The United States Constitution, First Amendment: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Wood Ridge High School Handbook, Rule 23, Part A: Defamation of any individual, student, or staff, is not tolerated at any cost and could result in suspension, expulsion, or the firing of a staff member.

Wood Ridge High School Handbook, Rule 23, Part B: Discriminating against any individual, student, or staff based on sex, race, background, or disability will result in suspension, expulsion, or in the case of a staff member, firing.



# Chitter Chatter: Fordmans v. Ivy Hill Middle School

## ***School***

Millstone Middle

Millstone

Grade 8

Honorable Mention

## ***Teacher***

Suman Kapoor

## ***Students***

Alyssa Bolshtyansky

Katie Chen

Dylan Davis

Jainil Gandhi

Shrey Khanna

Ridham Kupsad

Iraj Pandey

Anya Parikh

Anik Patel

Aanya Saran

Vincenzo Sposato

Clementine Vitug

Evan Voorand

## FACTS

Charlie Fordman is an 8th grader at Ivy Hill Middle School. Charlie is the captain of the school's basketball team and has played basketball all throughout middle school. He is a high-energy, impulsive student, and is very popular on social media. There are no disciplinary issues reported against him in school besides a few disruptions in class due to his impulsive actions when he gets upset. He has a private account on the popular social media app Chit Chat on which he posts frequently. His posts are private to his friends on the app, but since he is popular, many students in the school follow him. He frequently posts pictures of basketball games, and his followers look forward to it. Under his captainship and the new coach, Mr. Parkins, the team has won every match.

On Oct 20, the Ivy Hill basketball team was playing their final game of the season. The teams were tied. The whole town showed up for the game, and the court was packed, hoping Ivy Hill would win the state championship. Charlie, being the team captain and very competitive, wanted to win this game at any cost. He got one technical foul for his aggressive behavior. Mr. Parkins told Charlie to play as per the rules. Then, during the third quarter, Charlie got upset at a player from the other team who pushed him, and Charlie pushed him back. Mr. Parkins, after seeing Charlie's behavior, reprimanded him, and sat him out of the game. The Ivy Hill team lost this important final match. The audience was upset that the captain was benched.

Charlie left the court and later that night posted on his Chit Chat account, "Our basketball coach is a fool and a loser, not smart enough to see he needs me to win." He started a petition with the hashtag #ParkinsOut following the comment "Who's with me?" The comments of that post contained affirmations and other degrading comments towards the coach, Mr. Parkins.

The next day in Mr. Parkins's math class, everyone was making fun of the coach by whispering about the post and being disrespectful, which prevented him from getting through his lesson. Seeing students whispering, Mr. Parkins pulled a student out who mentioned Charlie's post. Mr. Parkins brought this to the school principal, Mr. Addams's attention.

Mr. Addams called many students to his office and looked at the social media post of Charlie Fordman and also at the petition #ParkinsOut. They found how many of the school students were writing inappropriate comments and emojis under the post. Out of 500 kids in the school, 217 saw the post, and 142 of those commented on it. Mr. Addams suspended Charlie from the school's basketball team for the remainder of the season and forbade him from participating in any school sports for the entire year.

Charlie's parents are now suing the Ivy Hill Middle School for doing an unreasonable search on Charlie's digital life and violating his Fourth Amendment rights, which under the Constitution of the United States state, "The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized."

They claim that as per the Fourth Amendment, private digital posts on social media are protected under the privacy laws and cannot be accessed by the school without a proper search warrant and are seeking compensation for the wrongful punishment of their child that caused him emotional trauma and social embarrassment. Fordmans claim that Charlie's Chit Chat account was private, and he was simply expressing his opinion on the coach's decision. They say a search of a social media account without a

valid search warrant violates the Fourth Amendment.

The school argues that the “petition,” #ParkinsOut, started by Charlie on social media, caused a substantial disruption to the classroom learning and the school environment, making the search and Charlie’s suspension from all sports justified. The Fordmans disagree, saying that a comment made by their child in a private social media post at home can’t be used by school to punish him. They are suing the school, saying that the school did an unreasonable search on Charlie’s private Chit Chat account without a search warrant, which violated his Fourth Amendment rights. They are seeking compensation for the wrongful suspension of their child which caused him emotional trauma and social embarrassment.

## ISSUE

Is the Ivy Hill Middle School liable for compensation to the Fordmans for violating Charlie Fordman’s Fourth Amendment rights by doing an unreasonable search on his social media account, causing him social embarrassment and giving him an unnecessary suspension from sports for the year?

## WITNESSES:

### *For the Plaintiff*

Laura Fordman  
Jim Riley

### *For the Defense*

Kevin Addams  
John Parkins

## WITNESS STATEMENTS

### *Testimony of Laura Fordman*

I am Laura Fordman, and I am Charlie’s mom. My son has always been a hard-working student. Basketball has been his passion since childhood and he has always dreamed of winning the state championship, but then that dream was

taken away from him. The school punished my son for a comment he made on a social media post venting out his coach’s punishment. I was there at the Oct 20 game, and he handled everything very maturely. He was given one technical foul in the game by the referees saying he was aggressive and pushing other team players. When his own team’s coach, Mr. Parkins, reprimanded him for being aggressive, he didn’t yell or scream. Charlie didn’t agree with coach Parkins’s decision to bench him but sat quietly. Their team lost and all of my son’s hard work and his dream ended in vain. Everyone in the audience was disappointed at Coach Parkins’s decision to bench my son. Seeing his team lose this important match, Charlie left the school in disappointment.

Later on that night, my son vented out his frustration on his private Chit Chat account. Many other students agreed with him, posting their own comments. I was told that these students continued the same discussion the next day in school. That is not Charlie’s fault. The school had no right or reason to check my son’s Chit Chat private account as everything he posted was in a private group with his friends. The school violated his Fourth Amendment rights by doing an unreasonable search on his private digital life. They wrongfully suspended him from the school’s basketball team for the remainder of the season and forbade him from participating in any school sports for the entire year, which caused him emotional trauma and social embarrassment.

### *Testimony of Jim Riley*

I am Jim Riley, Charlie’s best friend. I am also the co-captain of the basketball team, and I have been playing basketball with Charlie throughout middle school. On the day of the incident, we had our final basketball game of the season. The other team is known for playing rough, so Charlie was being aggressive with them. Charlie got a technical foul warning from the referee. Seeing this, Coach Parkins reprimanded and

benched Charlie. I asked the coach to let Charlie in during the last quarter and he told me, “Mind your own business.” We lost that important match of the season. I was upset because Charlie was one of the best players, and the team needed him to win.

When I went home, I checked my phone to see Charlie’s post on his Chit Chat account. Many students commented under that post with the petition #ParkinsOut. Next day, in Mr. Parkins’s math class, many students were whispering about the coach’s decision. Later that day, Mr. Addams called many students to his office and looked at Charlie’s social media post with the petition #ParkinsOut. We were all surprised to hear that Mr. Addams suspended Charlie from the school’s basketball team and also forbade him from participating in any school sports for the rest of the year.

### ***Testimony of Kevin Addams***

I am Kevin Addams, and I have been the principal of Ivy Hill Middle School for 11 years. On Oct 21, it was brought to my attention that students were misbehaving in Mr. Parkins’s class because of a social media post. I called these students to my office. Upon further inquiry, I came across a social media post written by Charlie Fordman calling his coach a fool and a loser. He had also started an online petition #ParkinsOut. 142 students from our school either liked, inappropriately commented on that post, or sent emojis. In Mr. Parkins’s math class, everyone was making fun of him, whispering about the post and being disrespectful towards him, which prevented him from getting through his lesson.

I was appalled by students disrespecting a teacher on social media and starting a campaign to remove him. I wouldn’t let anyone distract my school from a positive learning experience. Charlie crossed the line with his comments on his social media post which slanders my teaching and coaching staff. We as a school need to set an

example that all students and players respect the authority of teachers and coaches. Charlie’s petition #Parkinsout is a very demeaning action, and he should face consequences for disrespecting his coach on social media. I suspended Charlie from the school’s basketball team and forbade him to participate in any school sports for the year.

### ***Testimony of John Parkins***

I am John Parkins, and I am a math teacher at Ivy Hill Middle School. I am also the head basketball coach for the Ivy Hill Middle School basketball team. Whether in the classroom or on the basketball court, I want my students to behave and respect others, including their opponents. Charlie is a very good basketball player but tends to act impulsively when he doesn’t get his way. On Oct 20, we had a final match with the team known for playing rough. Even though winning this game was very important, I still warned all my players to play respectfully. I always tell my team to play by the rules and be good role models. Charlie played very aggressively during the first two quarters and got one technical foul. I reprimanded Charlie for his aggressive play and benched him for the remaining two quarters. We lost that game. Like others, I was very upset too.

Next day, in my math class, while I was teaching, students were talking about yesterday’s game and were giggling and disrupting my class. I pulled a student out who mentioned Charlie’s social media post #ParkinsOut. I brought this to Mr. Addams’s attention. Mr. Addams called many students to his office and searched Charlie’s social media account to investigate the post. I was shocked to see Charlie’s post saying, “Our basketball coach should lose his job because he’s not smart enough to see he needs me on the team to win.” He also started a “petition” #ParkinsOut saying “Who’s with me?” The comments of that post contained affirmations and other degrading comments towards me. Seeing the comments and students disrespecting me on social media

really hurt me.

Mr. Addams agreed that Charlie's petition #ParkinsOut is a very demeaning action, and he should face consequences for disrespecting his coach and teacher on social media. The school district suspended Charlie from the school's basketball team and also forbade him to participate in any school sports for the year.

## INSTRUCTIONS

The plaintiff must set out a convincing case against the defendant that the jury believes by a preponderance of the evidence that Ivy Hill Middle School violated Charlie's Fourth Amendment right and are liable for the damages.

## SUB-ISSUES

1. Does the school have a code of conduct policy for extracurricular activities?
2. Does the school have a code of conduct policy for the appropriate use of social media?
3. Is the code of conduct policy signed by all the parents and students?
4. Was Mr. Addams present at the game?
5. Did Charlie use a school-issued Chromebook to post on social media?
6. How did the school access the Chit Chat accounts of students?
7. What are the specific facts that were used to justify the search?
8. Can a student be disciplined for an off-campus post?

## CONCEPTS

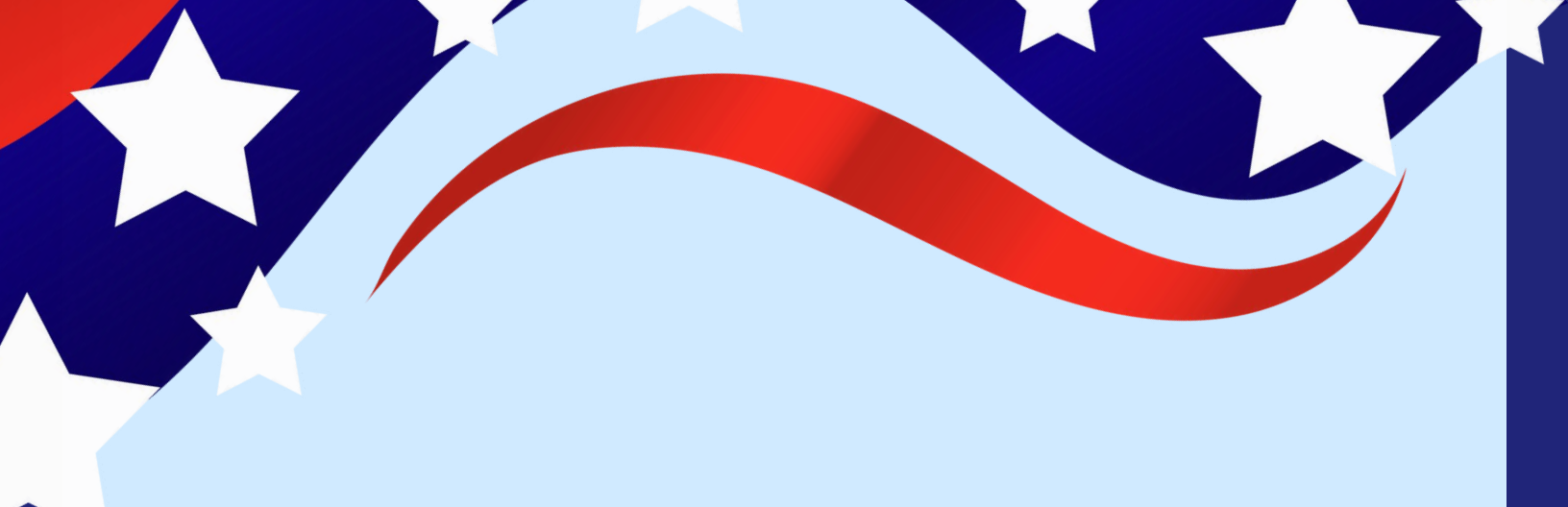
1. Credibility of witnesses
2. Burden of proof; preponderance of the evidence
3. Protections of Fourth Amendment Rights

## LAW

The Constitution of the United States of America, Fourth Amendment, "The right of the people to be secure in their persons,

houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized."

*New Jersey v. T.L.O.*, 469 U.S.325: The search of student's belongings is permissible if there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that the search will turn up evidence that the student "has violated or is violating either the law or the rules of the school."



# Larison v. Government of Robertson

## ***School***

Tinton Falls School District

Tinton Falls

Grade 8

Honorable Mention

## ***Teacher***

Colleen Murphy

## ***Students***

Hailey Ballanco

Shannon Feiter

Brandon Hansen

Isabella Ruiz

## FACTS

Farmers John Larison and Clarence Banks are neighbors. The county executive of Robertson, Tennessee, Maverick Miller, reached out to county commissioner, Sebastian Evergreen, to inform Mr. Larison and Mr. Banks that the county government needed one half of an acre of land from each of them to build a road to get to the new apartments and shops, Robertson Village. Mr. Evergreen helped Mr. Miller decide where to build the new road leading to Robertson Village, and whose land they would need to perform this task.

On August 11, 2023, the county government asked Mr. Banks for one half of an acre of his 10-acre land for \$7000 to build a road to get to Robertson Village. The shops would consist of First Watch Breakfast, Arizona Souvenir Shop, Dunkin' Donuts, Robertson Spa, and Ross Dress for Less.

On August 25, 2023, the county government asked Mr. Larison for one half of an acre of his 10-acre land for \$7,000. On the half acre that the government is taking is Mr. Larison's well which is used to irrigate his farm. Mr. Larison was given seven months to build his new well on a different spot on his property. The government gave him \$15,000 to pay for his new well. On top of the \$15,000, he had to pay the well installers an additional \$7,000 to have them come as soon as possible and perform this task quickly before the growing season. He had to take out an emergency loan of \$7,000 for seven months. Mr. Larison also had to pay the interest on the loan at a rate of 3.75%, resulting in paying a total of \$7,262.50. Due to freezing temperatures causing a frozen ground, the well builders had to stop building on December 18, 2023, and continued February 4, 2024. The start date for the construction of Robertson Village was April 14, 2024.

Mr. Larison is suing the county government for \$7,262.50, the cost of the loan plus interest to complete the necessary new well

before the growing season.

## ISSUE

Should the government pay the additional money Mr. Larison had to pay out of pocket for an emergency loan for his company to install his well within seven months, prior to the growing season?

## WITNESSES

### *For the Plaintiff*

John Larison  
Clarence Banks

### *For the Defense*

Maverick Miller  
Sebastian Evergreen

## WITNESS STATEMENTS

### *Testimony of John Larison*

My name is John Larison; I am a farmer in Robertson, Tennessee, a secluded area. There I own 10 acres of land which I use to grow my crops. I have lived here since I was 26 and have always loved the area. On August 25, the government came to my door wanting to seize half an acre of my land for \$7,000 to build a road for a shopping complex and apartments that are going up behind my land. When they took away my land, it took away my well which I use for irrigation of my crops. The government gave me \$15,000 to build a new well. However, I had to hire and pay a company out of pocket to build my well in time for the growing season.

Considering that I am a farmer and the expenses were even more as a result of this being an emergency situation, this was difficult for me. It cost me \$7,000, plus the loan interest of \$262.50, bringing the total to \$7,262.50.

When they took my land, it was seven months before planting season. I had very little time to find a company to build my new well. I had to pay an extra \$2,000 just to get the company to come sooner and make their other customers wait. To be able to afford all of this, I had to take out a loan for \$7,000. I

am still working on paying it off since I do not make enough to be able to afford the new well, feed my family, and keep the farm. The interest on the loan was \$262.50. On December 18, 2024, the well builders had to stop in the middle of the building process because the ground froze during the winter. They were not able to start working again until February 4, 2025, due to frigid temperatures. After losing all of this time, it was difficult to get everything done in time for the construction. Overall, I believe that I should get my \$7,000 and the interest of the loan back that I spent out of pocket because the government did not give me enough money and time to build a new well.

### ***Testimony of Clarence Banks***

I am Clarence Banks, a farmer in Robertson, Tennessee. I have lived next to Mr. Larison for 13 years. I used to own 10 acres of land for farming. However, on August 11, 2024, the government needed to take half an acre of my land to add a road leading into the new shopping center and apartment complex that is being built behind my land. During this process, they had to remove Mr. Larison's well. The government gave him \$15,000 to build a new one. As a farmer, I know that a well is a major part of farming; it provides drinking water for the livestock and is used as a source of irrigation for crops.

I know what it is like to have to pay for a well. As a farmer myself, we hardly make enough money to be able to afford our farm and family. When I heard he was going to have to pay \$7,000 out of pocket to accumulate a team and employees to get this well completed, I was stunned. It took me three years to pay off my well, which was also \$15,000. My farm was at its full capacity, and now he is going to be losing half an acre and must pay for a new well. I think that he should definitely get paid the \$7,000 plus interest that he had to pay out of pocket that the government did not give him for the well.

### ***Testimony of Maverick Miller***

I am Maverick Miller, the county executive of Robertson County, Tennessee. I have held my position for two years now. When I saw the rapidly increasing population of our county, I knew I needed to make some type of housing complex. I work in the same building as Sebastian Evergreen, and he has helped me a lot with this project because he has brought new ideas to our plan. Since the nearest shopping complex to these farms is 20 miles away, a shopping complex was needed there. Mr. Evergreen came up with the idea of apartments on top of the shopping complex. We then decided to add this idea to the plan due to the increase in our county's population. We started this on November 23, 2022.

Mr. Evergreen and I started to come up with the prices of Mr. Larison's and Mr. Banks' land in November of 2023 and decided construction would start April 14, 2024. We went to Mr. Banks' house to inform him on August 11, 2023. We then went to Mr. Larison's house to inform him on August 23, 2023. We decided on these prices by considering the best possible use of the land and the state price for each acre in Tennessee. We also followed the laws that applied to that land. For the State of Tennessee, it is \$7,000 for half an acre.

It took longer to justify the price of Mr. Larison's land since he has a well. We came to Mr. Larison's house two weeks later than we came to Mr. Banks due to an argument in the office about the total price of his land. On August 25, 2023, we went to Mr. Larison's house where he was out farming, so I informed him then. I told him that his land was worth \$7,000 since the well would be hard to take out, and the best possible use of his land is also for a road.

I gave Mr. Larison \$15,000 for a new well as well as an extra month to build it. It was plenty of money and time to build this well. The weather in the winter would not affect the

well considering that all the well builders needed to do was dig and install the well since a spot was already picked out.

### ***Testimony of Sebastian Evergreen***

I am Sebastian Evergreen, the county commissioner of Robertson, Tennessee. I have been the county commissioner for six years due to my productive and successful decisions. Mr. Miller called me into his office November 23, 2022, because he had the idea of adding a type of housing complex with the eight acres of land that we own behind Mr. Larison's and Mr. Banks' land. I proposed that we build shops underneath these apartments due to our increasing population and the fact that the nearest shopping mall was 20 miles away. The name chosen was Robertson Village. To do this, a road was built between both men's properties.

Mr. Miller and I started to come up with the prices of Mr. Larison's and Mr. Banks' land in November of 2023 and came up with the day that the construction would start, which is April 14, 2024. We went to Mr. Banks first on August 11, 2023. We then went to Mr. Larison on August 23, 2024. We decided on the prices of Mr. Larison's and Mr. Banks' land by considering the best possible use of the land and the state price for each acre in Tennessee.

Mr. Miller and I gave Mr. Larison six months to build his new well. It should take five months to get this done, and we gave him an extra month so that he could find a company to perform this task. We let them know six months in advance because we knew that Mr. Larison would need to build a new well.

### **INSTRUCTIONS**

The plaintiff, John Larison, must prove by a preponderance of the evidence that the defendant, Maverick Miller, did not give Mr. Larison enough time to build his well as per his Fifth Amendment rights.

### **SUB-ISSUES**

1. Why did they decide to build the shopping plaza where they did?
2. How did the county government decide on the amount in the first place?
3. How did they decide on how long to give him?

### **CONCEPTS**

1. Fifth Amendment
2. Preponderance of the evidence
3. Eminent Domain
4. Fair Market Value

### **LAW**

The Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution -... "nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation."

While the Federal government has a constitutional right to "take" private property for public use, the Fifth Amendment's Just Compensation Clause requires the government to pay just compensation, interpreted as market value, to the owner of the property, valued at the time of the takings. The U.S. Supreme Court has defined fair market value as the most probable price that a willing but unpressured buyer, fully knowledgeable of both the property's good and bad attributes, would pay. The government does not have to pay a property owner's attorney's fees unless a statute provides.



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