

PRESS RELEASE

**JUDGMENT ENTERED AGAINST PARIS POLICE OFFICERS MATTHEW
MC CONNELL AND KEVIN RING FOR CIVIL RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AGAINST
DISABLED PARIS TEEN**

Redwood Law Office is proud to announce that, after five years of litigation, the Federal Court for the Central District of Illinois entered judgment against Paris Police Officers Matthew McConnell and Kevin Ring (retired) for their actions against Skyler Davis, a Paris man with disabilities.

The trial was scheduled to begin on August 27, 2024, exactly five years after McConnell and Ring used their squad cars to chase Skyler, who was then 15 years old and riding a bicycle, because McConnell claimed that Skyler had violated a city ordinance that prohibits riding bicycles on sidewalks in the business district. A third Paris Police Officer, Cody Jewell (now a deputy sheriff) entered into a settlement agreement, paying money to avoid trial.

It is important to inform the citizens of the City of Paris that the funds for cash payments, to any person who settles with or wins a judgment against a city employee, come from an insurance policy that the City of Paris maintains for situations in which any of the city's employees injure someone, making the city liable to pay for the injuries. This is like your car insurance where you pay a premium every month and then, in case of accident, the insurance company pays the injured person, if you are found to be responsible.

The incident occurred on August 27, 2019 at around 5:00 p.m. Skyler was riding his bicycle and he swore under oath that he did not ride on any sidewalks. At the time, he was 4' 11" tall and weighed 70 pounds. When McConnell "lit him up", he was afraid that he was being harassed and rode away on his bike. Audio recording from the Paris Police Department dispatch provided to Redwood Law Office had McConnell stating "Little tough guy decided he was gonna run his mouth and get away from us!" That's when both Ring and McConnell pursued Skyler with their squad cars. Video footage from the Paris Police Department showed Ring driving his squad car over the front lawn of the Police Department in close pursuit of a small boy on a bicycle. Ring even drove up over a curb and into a citizen's front yard, chasing the youth. Skyler claimed that Ring hit the back tire of the bicycle with the squad car. Ring denied any such contact. That left a jury question for trial. At that point, the youth abandoned his bike and ran home.

At one point, McConnell exited his squad car and began chasing the youth on foot, but the boy on the bike easily escaped, leaving McConnell out of breath, on foot and, as described by an eye witness, "in a rage". Although McConnell denied that he was in a rage or even angry, McConnell charged into the house, grabbed Skyler, took him to the floor and handcuffed him and took him to the Paris Police Station, where he was handcuffed to a wall and left alone in a room for an hour, with no one personally checking on him.

Skyler claimed, and an eye witness agreed, that McConnell, who was 6'2" tall and weighed 185 pounds, threw Skyler into a wall and then threw him to the floor, handcuffed him and took him outside. McConnell testified that, when he entered the house, all the youth was doing was yelling, he was not out of control or being physically aggressive. Skyler, who has disabilities, was in a "meltdown" state, according to his family and friends. Skyler claimed that, when they were in the police station hallway, McConnell slammed his head into the wall. McConnell denied this and stated that the youth hit his own head on the wall.

Skyler received an ordinance ticket in the mail, but neither the City Attorney nor the State's Attorney prosecuted him for violating an ordinance or for any other crime stemming from the incident on August 27, 2019. However, then Chief of the Paris Police Department, Eric Brown, did give written warnings to both McConnell and Ring for several violations of the Paris Police Department Pursuit Policy, which has very specific requirements for initiating and reporting a vehicular pursuit. In addition, Chief Brown criticized Ring because he endangered Skyler's safety in the pursuit. Chief Brown noted that McConnell did not even write up an incident report until nine days later, after the chief requested his report.

In a situation that is typical in most police misconduct cases, neither the state nor the federal prosecutors had any interest in prosecuting the police officers involved. Citizens are often left to wonder why officers are not prosecuted for actions that would clearly result in criminal charges against a regular citizen. For instance, what would happen if some ordinary person got mad at a kid on a bicycle and decided to use his car to chase the kid through streets, alleys and parking lots and even jumped a curb, chasing the kid up into someone's residential front yard? Citizens are encouraged to REPORT POLICE MISCONDUCT to the local department officials and to the State and Federal prosecutors, if the misconduct would be a crime. A responsible police chief and a responsible sheriff should appreciate receiving a valid complaint about one of their employees violating a citizen's rights or committing a crime. A responsible head of a department can then take corrective action and educate the employee or terminate employment if complaints keep coming in.