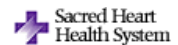


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## Sentence in Taser abuse falls well short of justice

The sentence handed down by U.S. District Judge Casey Rodgers -- in the case of a former Escambia County deputy found guilty of repeatedly shocking an innocent woman with a Taser -- is itself shocking.

**Six months of house arrest, 50 hours of community service, five years on probation and a \$3,000 fine?**

The judge had tough words for Charles Dix, but the sentence didn't match them.

What Dix did to Martha Bledsoe was criminal. It cost him his job, and cost the taxpayers of Escambia County \$250,000 in a settlement. And this after Dix cost the taxpayers \$150,000 in a previous settlement for using a Taser on a man who was trying to comfort his wife after an accident.

Dix inflicted apparently permanent damage on Bledsoe, who had called the Sheriff's Office to report an alleged case of child abuse.

Her reward? The deputy who responded -- Dix -- ended up blasting her four times with his stun gun, after, for reasons that remain unexplained, he became agitated with Bledsoe.

Rodgers, meanwhile, said all the right things -- until it came time to issue the sentence.

She said Dix "abused the trust" placed in him, and now wore "a badge of disgrace."

She said that because of the incident, "there is no way you can restore (Bledsoe's) trust in law enforcement."

She said Dix subjected Bledsoe to "torture and abuse" and damaged her life.

She said she listened in "horror" to a tape of Bledsoe screaming in agony as Dix blasted her with the Taser.

Finally, Rodgers said Bledsoe deserved an apology.

But Bledsoe was owed justice by the federal court, and that meant a sentence commensurate with the crime that was committed.

She didn't get it.

Rodgers justified the sentence by noting Dix's "cooperation with the government." According to Assistant U.S. Attorney Jim Oliver, Dix had provided "substantial assistance" in other criminal investigations.

That kind of a wording usually indicates a case in which one criminal snitches on another. Is that what happened here? Or unless Dix was involved with, or had knowledge of, other criminal activities since he left the Sheriff's Office, did he simply provide information he should have provided earlier anyway in order to get a lighter sentence?

**Does it mean we can expect to see other cases**

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## stemming from whatever this "substantial assistance" was?

For anyone outside of the judicial/law enforcement community, the light sentence is hard to see as anything but the system protecting one of its own.

It happens too often.

In 2003, a former Pensacola police officer -- he was fired -- pleaded no contest to a criminal charge of extortion, was placed on probation for two years and ordered to write a letter of apology.

His crime? He ordered a 16-year-old girl caught in a sexual situation with her boyfriend in a car to perform topless jumping jacks to keep them out of trouble. An ordinary citizen who did something like that would likely end up in jail as a sex offender.

Law enforcement officers who commit crimes don't just break the law, they break the public trust. They don't deserve special treatment.

### Article Comments

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**I agree** Fri Feb 16, 2007 2:43 am

Any citizen who had inflicted this level of pain or damage on another, particularly with their victim in a subordinate position, would be locked up for a long time. Not the case when you're dealing with the local police.

It would be nice to say this happens everywhere, but that's too easy and not strictly true. What happened to the Judge, one of the people who, along with the prosecutors and jury is supposed to represent us, the public? Hard words in this case are meaningless. A hard sentence was called for; the jury did their job, but the Judge let us down.

Posted by: **Retrokix**

**He was treated like a criminal!** Fri Feb 16, 2007 6:51 am

I certainly do not want to defend the ex-deputy... but if any citizen was charged with a crime and that citizen had no prior criminal record, they would never see any jail time either. Check the court records, almost every first time offender is offered some diversion program or allowed to plea to a lesser charge. None of this changes what the ex-deputy did, but by all appearances, he was treated like anyone else.

And please do not respond that you once had an uncle who's ex-wife lied about charges and had him arrested, etc. Take a minute and do some subjective research.

Posted by: **G. Manetti**

**Justice??** Fri Feb 16, 2007 7:09 am

So let me get this right. He rolled over on a fellow criminal deputy and got probation. Then he rolls over on another deputy and he gets probation....and so on and so on and so on..... Who's the last guy going to roll over on?

BTW, what does this guy do in the hospital at his new job....probably run the defibrillator. 😊

Posted by: **harleydog**

**Judge?** Fri Feb 16, 2007 7:11 am

U.S. District Judge Casey Rodgers forgot to add in her statements.....

there is no way you can restore the people's trust in the judicial system.

Posted by: **FASTMAN**

**Reader Comment** Fri Feb 16, 2007 8:08 am

Research indicates that any citizen, first offense or not, who tortured another citizen, would not be in some diversion program; indeed, even politicians convicted of first offense corruption, or tax evaders, convicted on their first offense (Frank Patti, the dinosaur preacher, etc.) receive jail time. This is indefensible on the judge's part - she should be required to submit a written explanation of why this sentence was so light and list the 'assistance' that this animal gave.

Don't tell me that Federal judges are there for life - they most

certainly CAN be removed from the bench when involved in political corruption, and this sentence reeks of back room politics and cheesy deals.

Posted by: **listposter**

**Well short of justice..** Fri Feb 16, 2007 8:54 am

That sentence falling "well short of justice" is perhaps, the understatement of the year. Having "strong words" for this coward is hardly enough.

This "man" costs us \$400,000 between his two taser parties, not to mention court costs. Why isn't he required to pay it back? I don't care how long it takes him...

Posted by: **SAMMY12**

**What information did he have?** Fri Feb 16, 2007 8:57 am

When the judiciary fails to hold law enforcement responsible for upholding the law, there is no justice.

But, when law enforcement disobeys the law, there is no law. Period.

This guy must have had some jeweled information for this type of deal or the allegations of downtown insiderism appears justified. Regarding the former, are we ever going to see the fruit of his snitching or will Sheriff McNesby be allowed to handle it internally? As to the latter, all I can say is "brought to you by the same guys who gave you the Community Maritime Park."

Posted by: **Texar Guy**

**Reader Comment** Fri Feb 16, 2007 10:20 am

Texar Guy, I think you're confusing "Judge Casey Rodgers," who has no involvement with the CMP to my knowledge, with "Judge Lacey Collier," who became a CMP principal after the deaths of Admiral Fetterman and Mayor Whibbs and is currently chairman of the CMPA Board.

I can understand how you got the two confused. Judge Collier is a man, while Judge Rodgers is a WomAn -- a difference of just two letters!

Judge Collier (the CMPA one, in case you've already forgotten) has also been pivotal in bringing the Snoezelen sensory facilities to the Westgate Center. I'm sure he wouldn't mind if you referred to that achievement as "from the same guys who gave you the Community Maritime Park."

Facts are pesky things, no?

Posted by: **joezoo**

**not confused a'tall** Fri Feb 16, 2007 11:13 am

Not confused a'tall joezoo. I was just playing with a concept, with gender, names, and accomplishments notwithstanding.

There is a perception in this community, which I share to some degree, that there is a downtown mindset that goes to protect the rich, well-connected, and elected.

Sheriff McNesby and his boys (girls) have been let off the hook time and again by many of the judges serving Northwest Florida.

If we were having coffee together joe, we could discuss the nuance of our comments, if needed. Maybe the glint in one's eye or the curled lip might be giveaways alone, without explanation.

But thanks for the update anyway, bro'.

Posted by: **Texar Guy**

**TASER SENTENCING** Fri Feb 16, 2007 11:33 am

Judge Casey Rogers is a federal judge who was appointed for a life-long appointment by President George Bush. I had always thought judges were elected, and could therefore be replaced. This being said, this appointment illustrates a terrible flaw in the American judicial system. Judges can rule anyway they want without repercussions. This is hardly justice. I don't know if anything can be done about this. There is an agency that oversees judges, but I don't think they actually do anything.

Ex-Deputy Dix deserves to be punished to the fullest extent of the law. This judge needed to send a message loud and clear to everyone; that torture and abuse will not be tolerated. The only messages being sent are when poor people go before judges who decide to make examples of them. This is perverted justice to say the least.

Posted by: **citizenmom**

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