



J. HANLEY

WINNEBAGO COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY

PRESS RELEASE
November 8, 2022
State's Attorney J. Hanley

Winnebago County State's Attorney J. Hanley announces that Larry Lee Wilkins was charged with the offenses of Aggravated Arson, Arson, and Criminal Damage to State Supported Property via complaint on November 7, 2022.

On November 5, 2022, at approximately 10:44 p.m., the Rockford Fire Department responded to a fire at the "old" Winnebago County Courthouse located at 403 Elm Street. Fire investigators conducted an origin and cause investigation which determined the fire to be incendiary in nature. The investigation concluded that the fire began in a west exterior stairwell and extended into the basement of the courthouse. The fire caused major damage to the contents and structure of the courthouse with the damage estimated to be more than \$200,000. Further, during firefighting operations, a City of Rockford firefighter received a head injury, which required him to be transported via ambulance to a local hospital emergency room for treatment.

As part of the investigation, fire investigators viewed Winnebago County's security video and were able to see a fire erupt in the west exterior stairwell of the Winnebago County Courthouse at approximately 10:30 p.m. on November 5. The video showed a person walk out of the burning stairwell, walk west on Elm St, then turn north through the parking tunnel to East State Street. Video from the Rockford Mass Transit District station taken shortly thereafter showed another angle of the same person walking north through the parking tunnel to East State Street. The individual in the video was wearing dark clothing with his pants worn down near his knees.

On November 7, a Winnebago County employee who had also viewed the video alerted fire investigators that a person was sleeping in the west stairwell who may match that of the person seen on county security video leaving the stairwell at the time of the fire. The investigators arrived at the west exterior stairwell and spoke with Larry Lee Wilkins who was wearing a black hoodie and black pants, with the pants being worn around his knees. After speaking with Wilkins, he left and walked north through the parking tunnel nearby.

Wilkins was wearing the same clothing as the person investigators saw on the video leaving the stairwell after the fire started and walked with a similar gait. Investigators concluded that Larry Lee Wilkins was the person on the video walking away from the fire eruption on November 5.

Aggravated Arson is a Class X Felony punishable by 6-30 years in the Illinois Department of Corrections; Arson is a Class 2 felony punishable by 3-7 years in the Illinois



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Department of Corrections; and Criminal Damage to State Supported Property, which as charged, is a Class 1 felony punishable by 4-15 years in the Illinois Department of Corrections.

The charges are merely allegations and the defendant is presumed innocent until or unless proven guilty in a court of law.

The case was investigated by the Rockford Fire Department.

Winnebago County State's Attorney's Office
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