



J. HANLEY

WINNEBAGO COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY

PRESS RELEASE
June 20, 2024
State's Attorney J. Hanley

Winnebago County State's Attorney J. Hanley announces that **Stephen C. Pettaway, III (DOB: 12/6/1987)** was found guilty of two counts of Aggravated Domestic Battery after a jury trial before the Honorable Judge Ryan Swift. He was acquitted of lesser counts of Unlawful Restraint and Resisting or Obstructing a Peace Officer.

On February 6, 2023, not long after midnight, Winnebago County Dispatch placed a call back to an unknown number that had attempted to call for emergency assistance. They reached an adult female in distress, who said she called 911 earlier, but no longer wished to report anything because she was afraid her attacker would kill her if she talked to police. The woman refused to identify herself or the suspect and indicated she was driving back home out-of-state. She was persuaded to return to the Machesney Park Police Substation, where she met deputies. She had severe bruising and swelling to her head and face, and bruising all across her body. It was later learned she suffered a nasal fracture, and had internal swelling to tissue around her carotid artery. The woman disclosed she was strangled and beaten by her boyfriend at their AirBnB at 8614 Victory Lane. Her boyfriend was staying there for work and she had come to visit him. She disclosed it was not the first instance of abuse in their relationship, and there had been another similar incident about a month prior in their home state. Reluctantly, the woman identified her boyfriend as Stephen Pettaway. Deputies went and located Pettaway asleep at the residence, amidst signs of a struggle, with apparent blood stains on his clothing and a visible injury to the knuckle of one hand.

Following his arrest and prior to trial, the State's Attorney's Office uncovered evidence Pettaway repeatedly contacted his victim from the Winnebago County Jail, in violation of a court order, to discuss his case and to instruct her not to cooperate with the prosecution. State's Attorney investigators located over 2,500 completed phone calls to the victim prior to trial. At trial, the victim did not appear to testify. However, prosecutors brought motions to introduce her account of abuse in her absence, successfully arguing that the defendant had forfeited his right to confront her as a witness due to his wrongdoing from the jail. The jury received evidence of the victim's account of the violence committed against her as well as evidence of the defendant's continuous contact with her from the jail.



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Pettaway is scheduled to be back in court on July 23, 2024 for a sentencing hearing in front of the Judge Swift in Courtroom C of the Winnebago County Criminal Justice Center.

Aggravated Domestic Batter is a Class 2 Felony that is punishable by a period of probation or 3-7 years in the Illinois Department of Corrections, followed by 4 years of mandatory supervised release. Truth-in-sentencing would apply to any prison sentence for that offense.

The Winnebago County Sheriff's Department conducted the investigation in this case. Assistant State's Attorneys Alex Ronning and Andrew Marcum are handling the prosecution.

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