



**J. HANLEY**

WINNEBAGO COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**October 2, 2026**  
**State's Attorney J. Hanley**

Winnebago County State's Attorney J. Hanley announces that **Dezzeion F. Benjamin (DOB: 6/2/2000)** was found guilty of First-Degree Murder and Aggravated Unlawful Use of Weapons after a three-day jury trial before the Honorable Judge Ronald White.

On October 24, 2023, Rockford Police responded to the 1400 block of Meadow Court after 911 calls from multiple people screaming that a male had been shot in the chest. Upon arrival, officers located an adult male victim, later identified as Benjamin Bledsoe, lying unresponsive in the roadway. Bledsoe was transported to the hospital, where he was pronounced deceased. While on scene, the defendant, Dezzeion Benjamin told police he shot Bledsoe. During trial, several witnesses testified that they saw the defendant shoot Bledsoe. On the stand, the defendant told jurors he thought Bledsoe had a gun and fired in self-defense, however no weapon was found on the victim or at the scene besides the one Benjamin had.

First Degree Murder is Class M Felony that is punishable by a sentence of 20-60 years in the Illinois Department of Corrections followed by three years of mandatory supervised release.

Aggravated Unlawful Use of Weapons is a Class 4 Felony that is punishable by a sentence of 1-3 years in the Illinois Department of Corrections followed by a year of mandatory supervised release.

Benjamin is scheduled to be back in court for post-trial motions on October 6, 2026 before Judge White in Courtroom 316 of the Winnebago County Courthouse.

The Rockford Police Department conducted the investigation in this case. First Assistant State's Attorney Ken LaRue and Assistant State's Attorney Keith Doherty are handling the prosecution.

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