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https://www.law.com/dailyreportonline/2024/08/21/i-do-not-trust-the-legal-system-pro-trump-lawyer-lin-wood-reacts-to-4-5m-verdict-awarded-against-him/



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NEWS

## 'I Do Not Trust the Legal System': Pro-Trump Lawyer Lin Wood Reacts to \$4.5M Verdict Awarded Against Him

"The verdict was unjust," defendant Lucian Lincoln "Lin" Wood Jr. told the Daily Report Tuesday. "Our legal system in Georgia is corrupt and dominated by Freemasons."

August 21, 2024 at 12:15 PM

Litigation



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Litigation Reporter



### What You Need to Know

- Federal jury returns \$4.5 million verdict against Pro-Trump defamation attorney Lucian Lincoln 'Lin' Wood Jr.
- Defamation claims filed by Wood's ex-colleagues after defendant accused the Wade Grunberg & Wilson attorneys of committing extortion in online comments.
- Verdict comes five months after Wood's extortion accusations deemed 'false and defamatory' by U.S. District Judge Michael L. Brown.
- Defamation litigation pit plaintiffs counsel with Beal Sutherland Berlin & Brown against defense counsel with Downey & Cleveland.

In an ironic twist, a retired defamation attorney must now pay \$4.5 million to a trio of former colleagues he's accused of defaming.

Having convinced a federal jury to return the seven-figure verdict against defendant Lucian Lincoln "Lin" Wood Jr., plaintiff counsel with Beal Sutherland Berlin & Brown are now crediting the outcome to their ability to overcome defamation defenses launched by the expert defendant with aid of their clients' impactful testimony.

"In our field, your reputation is everything," said Beal Sutherland Berlin & Brown partner Milinda Brown. "I think the jury saw how much this impacted [the plaintiffs] and their mental health to have had somebody that they trusted as their mentor accuse them of a crime."

But the matter might not be over, as Wood has begun to explore his appellate options.

## **'Followers Reacted and Attacked'**

Brown joined forces with firm partner Andrew "Drew" Beal to represent Wade, Grunberg & Wilson attorneys' Jonathan Grunberg, Nicole Wade and Taylor Wilson. They brought a federal defamation claim against Wood in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia.

What began two years prior with Grunberg, Wade and Wilson disagreeing with Wood about the terms of their departure from the pro-Trump attorney's law firm snowballed into a defamation complaint in March 2022.

As the parties disagreed about how much and by when the departing attorneys should be paid, Wood took to the Telegram app to accuse his former partners of extortion.

"When the statements were made online, Lin had a lot of followers," Beal said. "Those followers reacted and attacked each one of these people online and said horrible things to them."

According to Beal, some of Wood's supporters attempted to intimidate the plaintiffs against continuing to pursue legal claims against the defendant.

"In one such post, [Woods' followers] called out to Lin and asked for pictures of the plaintiffs so that they could follow them and see them at their children's sporting events," Beal said.

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In addition to seeking information about the plaintiffs, Beal noted online commentators threatened to harm the Wade, Grunberg & Wilson attorneys.

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### **Read: [Complaint](#)**

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Downey & Cleveland attorneys R. Christopher Harrison and Jackson A. Griner defended Wood against the defamation claim but had not responded to a Daily Report request for comment as of midday Wednesday.

On Wood's behalf, the defense duo moved for summary judgment, but U.S. District Court Judge Michael L. Brown issued a ruling in favor of the plaintiffs' defamation claim on March 12.

Brown, however, denied both parties' motions to seal a variety of documents related to both "discrete" and public information and documents, including Wood's deposition transcript.

Throughout the 27-page order, Brown established his basis for determining that Wood had defamed his former colleagues as a matter of law.

"Given the totality of the record, including the parties' factual submissions and legal arguments, a reasonable jury could only conclude Defendant's extortion accusations were false and defamatory," Brown wrote in March.

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### **Read: [Federal Order](#)**

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In the order, Brown pointed out that Wood had not attempted to prove his accusations to be true.

"Indeed, he admits Plaintiffs did not commit 'the crime of extortion,'" Brown wrote. "But he insists his extortion accusations were still non-false because they contained 'loose, figurative, or hyperbolic language' that no reasonable person could construe as a genuine accusation of criminal conduct. The Court disagrees."

Following the summary judgment hearing, plaintiffs counsel said attempts to resolve the matter proved ineffective.

“Chris and I were hopeful that we could put together some kind of settlement dialogue, but that never happened,” Beal said.

With the parties remaining at odds, the matter proceeded to a federal jury trial on Aug. 7.

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## **‘We’re Down the Homestretch’: Opposing Counsel Say Lin Wood Defamation Trial Could Happen in 2024**

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### **‘A God-Given Right’**

While outlining Wood’s defense in a consolidated pre-trial order [attachment](#) filed in May, defense counsel contended Judge Brown erred by granting judgment as a matter of law to the plaintiffs on the issues of falsity, defamatory nature, lack of privilege, and the presence of harm. Defense counsel posited that the issues could “only be properly decided by a jury.”

In the filing, defense counsel also challenged the validity of the plaintiffs’ case, contending clear and convincing evidence didn’t exist to prove Wood published “a false and defamatory statement of fact with Constitutional actual malice [equivalent to] actual knowledge of falsity or reckless disregard for truth or falsity.”

“This is a case of free speech, and not of contract breach or fraud. Plaintiffs are attempting to subvert a case of free speech into a case of contract breach and fraud,” read the defense brief. “In the process, they try to interject irrelevant information into evidence in an effort to confuse the jury into believing this case is about breach of contract and fraud, when in fact it is only about Mr. Wood’s right of free speech, and whether he expressed it lawfully. Freedom of speech is a God-given right.”

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### **Read: Consolidated Pre-Trial Order**

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At trial, plaintiffs counsel said they had to overcome Wood’s leverage of his own expertise.

“He spent a big portion of his lengthy career as a successful plaintiff’s defamation attorney,” Beal said. “He certainly is keenly aware of all of the defenses to a defamation claim, and he certainly employed each and every one of those defenses as much as he possibly could.”

Plaintiffs counsel circumvented the obstacle by leaning on their clients’ shared defamation expertise, and first hand testimony of how being defamed by Wood had impacted their lives.

“Our female client was attacked with threats of rape and sexual assault [by some of Wood’s online supporters]. Reciting what it was like reading that and being afraid of those actions was moving,” Beal said. “Another client testified about the awful anti-Semitic comments that they made about wanting to kill him ... primarily it seemed because he was Jewish.”

When combined with Judge Brown’s prior defamation ruling, plaintiffs counsel Brown said the plaintiffs’ collaborative testimony helped streamline the trial, leaving the jury to decide whether Wood’s statements involved negligence and actual malice.

## **\$4.5 Million Verdict**

After a week of trial and several hours of deliberations, the federal jury returned a verdict awarding \$3.75 million for actual damages related to the plaintiffs' joint defamation claim on Aug. 15.

Following a second trial phase the next day, the jury awarded \$750,000 in attorney's fees, increasing the total plaintiff verdict to \$4.5 million.

According to Beal, plaintiffs counsel and their clients are "pleased" with the outcome.

"We had three highly ethical, very accomplished attorneys as clients," said Brown. "Sometimes people say having attorneys as clients is the hardest thing, but when you have people like Jonathan, Taylor and Nicole, who have spent their whole careers doing this type of law, and you have great facts, that's really what [prevails] at the end of the day."

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### **Read: Verdict**

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1rCORteCrJDX2E\\_NUJvkwWzIMwYK63DGw/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1rCORteCrJDX2E_NUJvkwWzIMwYK63DGw/view?usp=sharing)

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As plaintiffs counsel shift their focus back to their clients' ongoing contractual dispute against Wood with a [motions hearing](#) before Atlanta Judicial Circuit Superior Court Judge Scott McAfee on Sept. 6, Wood has indicated that the federal defamation matter might not be over yet.

When reached for comment Tuesday, Wood told the Daily Report he's considering appealing the verdict.

"The verdict was unjust," Wood said. "Our legal system in Georgia is corrupt and dominated by Freemasons. Freemasons will always persecute an adopted son of God. I am exploring my appeal options. I love Jesus Christ. I trust Him. I do not trust the Georgia legal system."

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