

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SETTLEMENT IN DEMERCURIO AND WYNN V. DALLAS COUNTY AND CHAD LEONARD

On January 21, 2026, Gary DeMercurio and Justin Wynn entered into a settlement agreement with the Defendants in their lawsuit. The terms of the settlement are simple. In return for a Release and Dismissal of their lawsuit, the Defendants will pay Gary and Justin \$600,000. Since this settlement involves a governmental entity, there is no confidentiality. In addition, there are no restrictions on Gary and Justin commenting on the events, the lawsuit, or the terms of settlement.

For Gary and Justin, this 6 year plus odyssey began immediately after they were told by six (6) law enforcement officials that they were free to go, those six law enforcement officials having confirmed that they were simply doing a job tasked by the Iowa Judicial Branch, a task that was to be kept from law enforcement in order to assure the validity and value of the security assessment. The investigation by the six law enforcement officials from two agencies was professional, practical, and surprisingly jovial. Gary and Justin shared their experiences, tips, and talent with these officers, and the video cameras caught all of it. By every account, Gary and Justin were professional, cooperative, and willing to share their vast knowledge of security. The fact that law enforcement had difficulty using their key cards to enter the closed Dallas County Courthouse was an ironic twist to this encounter. But this calm, cooperative environment changed the minute that Sheriff Leonard showed up. No one had asked him to come.

Gary and Justin are two of the finest security and cybersecurity experts in the country. When Sheriff Leonard arrived and the atmosphere changed, Gary and Justin remained calm, cooperative, and professional. Sheriff Leonard spent less than a minute with Gary and Justin before deciding that they were going to jail. And the rest is history.

This lawsuit was important to Gary and Justin for several reasons. First, and foremost, their reputations, well earned over many years, had been trashed in the media, their mugshots plastered for all to see, and they were silenced by the arrest and pending criminal charges. This was one opportunity to tell their world, the security industry, that they had acted professionally and were bound and determined to take back their reputations. Secondly, their industry needed them to fight back, to remind people that “security” in this world does not belong only to those that want to find ways to breach it. Rather, it belongs to those prepared to protect our lives, livelihoods, and truths.

Finally, Gary and Justin wanted to hold people accountable for what had happened to them. In a world that seems to shrug at the undermining of our principles, institutions, and values, we need people like Gary and Justin. They are the best of us, and efforts to undermine what they do make us all less secure.

One other thing needs to be mentioned. When all hell broke loose for Gary and Justin, the Iowa Judicial Branch lawyered up and did its best to distance itself from them, adding to the wrongful perception that they were guilty. It was not the institution's best moment. Ironically enough, accountability for the Judicial Branch cannot be found in the Courtrooms it furnishes---the product of immunity granted by the Legislature. But that does not mean that it is not responsible. This was ultimately a "turf war" between the County Sheriff and the State's Judicial Branch, and Gary and Justin were the toys of that feud. As one of my friends tells me about my golf game, "play better."

I am thankful for the work done by Judge Amy Moore and appreciate the cooperation of Counsel for the Defendants. I wish all of them well.

I was honored to represent Gary and Justin and hope and trust that the people who once revered them now realize that there was never a valid reason to believe the allegations and charges that brought them on this 6-year odyssey. I wish them well and hope they regain their standing in their industry; we need them to be successful.

--Martin A. Diaz