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IN THE STATE COURT OF CHEROKEE COUNTY
STATE OF GEORGIA

STATE OF GEORGIA	*	
	*	Case No. 26M0811-AJ
v.	*	
	*	Charges: Obstruction (2 counts)
NATASHA LEE LOPEZ,	*	(O.C.G.A. § 16-10-24(a))
Defendant.	*	

MOTION FOR ENTRY OF *NOLLE PROSEQUI*

COMES NOW the State of Georgia, by and through the undersigned Solicitor-General of Cherokee County, and hereby moves for the entry of a *nolle prosequi* in the above-captioned case, upon the grounds set forth below:

I. FACTUAL BACKROUND

This Court heard testimony and received evidence in this case during two motions hearings held on August 7 and September 18, 2026. In an order entered on October 21, 2026 regarding the issues raised by the Defendant at the September 18 hearing, the Court entered findings of fact pertinent to the instant motion. In sum,[1] the Court found that on the night of August 29, 2025, former Cherokee County Sheriff's Office Corporal Charles Mills (hereinafter, "Mills") observed a motorcycle speeding well above the 40 mile-per-hour speed limit on Wade Green Road and attempted a traffic stop. The rider fled, turning onto Georgia Highway 92 and successfully eluding law enforcement. Using FLOCK and Department of Transportation camera footage, Mills traced the motorcycle's movements from a shopping center in Cobb County to an apartment complex near Bells Ferry Road and Buice Lake Parkway. The footage showed reckless driving at high rates of speed and multiple lane violations. Mills also identified the motorcycle by its distinctive red "mags" (magnesium alloy wheels) and noted the rider's clothing, including a black helmet, black T-shirt, blue jeans, white shoes, and a backpack.

The following day, Mills investigated the apartment complex and learned from a resident that the motorcycle belonged to Joseph Helms, who lived there with his girlfriend, Taylor Zoeller. After locating Helms at his workplace (a Papa John's Pizza restaurant in the Cobb County shopping center near Helms' route on the previous evening), Mills spoke with him. Helms

[1] The Court's specific and detailed findings can be found within the "Order" entered in this case on October 21, 2026.

admitted owning a motorcycle but denied being the rider who fled from police. Mills observed that Helms' clothing matched the rider's appearance in the camera footage. Later, Mills found Zoeller's vehicle at the home of Helms' mother, the Defendant in this case, and began the process of drafting an arrest warrant for Helms. As he did so, the Defendant and Helms arrived at the residence and began walking towards the house. Mills attempted to speak with Helms again, but the Defendant told him that Helms did not wish to speak with him. Mills turned his attention back to obtaining the arrest warrant.

After the arrest warrant was obtained, Mills returned to the Defendant's residence, where Helms was taken into custody. Although Helms had provided a cell phone number earlier that day, he claimed not to have a phone when arrested. Mills believed the phone was being concealed and intended to seek a search warrant because of the likelihood it contained digital evidence relevant to the investigation, including possible location data. To preserve the scene, Mills instructed those present to remain outside the home, at which time the Defendant directed them to go inside. That action formed the basis of the charge in Count 1 of the accusation in this case. When Mills advised that he would obtain a search warrant and attempted to secure the residence to prevent the imminent destruction of vulnerable digital evidence, the Defendant repeatedly refused to comply, blocked his entry, and began calling 911. That action formed the basis of the charge in Count 2 of the accusation in this case. Based upon the Defendant's behavior, Mills arrested the Defendant for obstruction.

Following the Defendant's arrest, Mills entered the residence to secure it, remained only long enough to direct occupants to exit, and ***did not perform a search of the residence at that point in time.*** He then obtained a warrant to search the residence for Helms' phone, which he executed. The phone itself was ultimately located on Zoeller's person.

II. PROCEDURAL BACKROUND

On May 14, 2026, the State filed the accusation in this case charging the Defendant with two counts of misdemeanor Obstruction. During the pendency of this case, the Defendant filed several motions challenging various aspects of the State's case, including:

1. A General Demurrer (challenging the legal sufficiency of the State's accusation);
2. A Special Demurrer (challenging the form of the accusation);
3. A "Motion to Require the State to Submit a Realistic Witness List;"
4. A general Motion to Dismiss based upon the Demurrers and alleged discovery violations;
5. A Motion to Compel Discovery alleging discovery violations, including violations of Brady v. Maryland, 373 U.S. 83 (1963);
6. A Challenge to the Probable Cause Supporting Helms' Arrest;

7. A Motion to Dismiss Based Upon Unlawful Entry in Violation of the Fourth Amendment;
8. A Challenge to the Probable Cause Supporting the Search Warrant;
9. A Motion to find the Search Warrant Invalid due to Presentation of Knowingly False Information to the Magistrate; and
10. A Motion to Dismiss based on Sheriff's Office body-worn camera policy violations.

The first four motions were denied by this Court in an Order entered on August 17, 2026. The fifth motion involving discovery remains under review by this Court as of the date of this motion.[2] The remaining five motions were denied in the Court's October 21, 2026 order. Thus, the Court has **rejected** the Defendant's claims that Mills lacked probable cause to arrest her, unlawfully entered her residence, or executed an invalid search warrant obtained through false information. The Court reached these conclusions after receiving testimony and evidence during two separate motions hearings. The Court also determined that body-worn camera policy violations committed by deputies present during the August 30, 2025 incident did not warrant dismissal of the charges.

Under ordinary circumstances, the State would now be prepared to proceed to trial so that a Cherokee County jury could decide whether the Defendant committed the charged acts of obstruction. No evidence has been suppressed, no warrant has been found invalid, and **no action by a member of the Cherokee County Sheriff's Office has been found to violate the Defendant's constitutional or statutory rights.** However, subsequent developments have materially affected the State's assessment of the case.

III. BASIS OF THE MOTION FOR *NOLLE PROSEQUI*

Following her arrest, the Defendant made numerous social media posts criticizing the deputies involved in her arrest, members of the Sheriff's Office command staff, the Sheriff's Office as an agency, the Solicitor-General's Office, the Assistant Solicitors-General assigned to the case, and other county officials.[3] The nature and extent of these posts can be reviewed on the

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[2] At the Court's direction, the State provided it with (a) audio recordings of Internal Affairs interviews concerning the Defendant's arrest; (b) documentation relating to prior, *unrelated* Internal Affairs investigations involving deputies connected to the Defendant's arrest; and (c) an audio recording of an interview with Taylor Zoeller conducted by the Office of the Solicitor-General. The State's position remains that (a) portions of the Internal Affairs interviews concerning this case may be subject to disclosure, provided an appropriate protective order is entered; (b) materials relating to *unrelated* Internal Affairs investigations should be excluded as improper character evidence under O.C.G.A. § 24-6-608; and (c) the Taylor Zoeller interview constitutes privileged work product not subject to disclosure under Wellstar Health Sys. v. Jordan, 293 Ga. 12 (2013).

[3] It is important to note that the Defendant's posts were lawful. The Defendant, like all other citizens, has a First Amendment right to speak her mind. However, the fact that a person has the legal right to say something does not make it true, and it certainly does not make it *wise* (especially when it is said online to a social media audience). Here, the Defendant's social media activity was lawfully deceptive, cruel, hateful, and otherwise in poor taste. The

Defendant's Facebook page. (See https://www.facebook.com/Noblesocials.) From the outset, it has been evident that the Defendant would prefer to argue her case on social media, where posts can be published without regard for the truth, rather than in a court of law governed by Rules of Evidence that prioritize truthfulness and authenticity.

With one exception, the officials targeted by these attacks have responded appropriately, which is to say that they have *not* responded except through official channels. However, the lone exception is significant. At some point after the accusation in this case was filed in May of this year, a Facebook page called "Not So Noble" (now removed from the site) appeared on the platform. While individuals may differ in their characterization of the page, its primary focus was the Defendant. Following the motion hearing on September 18, 2026, Mills informed Solicitor-General's Investigator Kaemmerle Zimmerman that he had created and operated the page. Once that information came into the possession of the Solicitor-General's Office, it was disclosed to the Defendant as Brady material. The disclosure was made by email at 9:39 a.m. on September 21, 2026.

The reasons for Mills' actions are not material to this motion. Regardless of his motivations, the State concludes that it was inappropriate for a deputy sheriff to operate a social media page focused on a criminal defendant in a case where he was the primary witness. Sheriff Frank Reynolds determined that Mills' conduct warranted termination, and his employment ended shortly after the September 21 disclosure. Although the evidence presented during the motion hearings established that Mills' conduct during the August 30, 2025 incident did not prevent the prosecution from proceeding, the nature of his social media activity has substantially affected the viability of the case.

In short, the State no longer has confidence that a jury would (or could) evaluate Mills' testimony without regard to this development. Given the nature of the charges and the law-enforcement actions at issue, the State's case depends significantly upon Mills' reliability as a witness. In light of the circumstances surrounding the "Not So Noble" page, the State believes there is a substantial risk that those issues would affect a jury's assessment of his testimony. Therefore, based upon the undersigned Solicitor-General's evaluation of the case, the State no longer believes a conviction is reasonably likely.

In seeking an order for *nolle prosequi*, the State does not concede that the actions of the Sheriff's Office were unlawful or improper. To the contrary, the Court's October 21, 2026 Order **rejected the Defendant's legal challenges** to those actions. Until the disclosure concerning the "Not So Noble" Facebook page, this case remained on track for trial. While Mills' subsequent

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State references that activity not as a basis for criminal liability, but because it provides context for the events discussed in this motion.

conduct has inhibited the State's ability to proceed, those later actions do not change the State's position regarding the Defendant's conduct on August 30, 2025. Rather, they affect the State's assessment of whether it can now prove the criminality of her conduct beyond a reasonable doubt.

For each of the foregoing reasons, and despite the sufficient probable cause supporting the issuance of the warrant for the Defendant's arrest, the State no longer believes it can establish guilt beyond a reasonable doubt due to the intervening circumstances. The State therefore requests that the Court enter an order of *nolle prosequi*. Based upon the nature of this motion, records relating to the Defendant's arrest are **restrictable.**

It is so moved this 12th day of November, 2026.

Todd Hayes, Solicitor-General
State Court of Cherokee County
State of Georgia

***NOLLE PROSEQUI* ORDER**

The State of Georgia having filed the above "Motion for *Nolle Prosequi*" in the above-captioned matter as to the charges / counts enumerated, and it appearing there is reasonable cause for such action, the Court hereby consents to the entry of said *nolle prosequi*.

IT IS SO ORDERED AND ADJUDGED this 12 day of Nov, 20 26.

Judge
State Court of Cherokee County