



KAREN D. McDONALD

Office of the Prosecuting Attorney, Oakland County Michigan

1200 North Telegraph Road • West Wing, Building 14-E • Pontiac, Michigan 48341
Phone: 248-858-0656 • Fax: 248-858-0660

David W. Williams, Chief Assistant Prosecutor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Oakland County Prosecutor Karen D. McDonald Announces Release of Special Prosecutor's Report and Recommendation to Vacate Conviction of Juwan Deering

PONTIAC, Mich. — Today, Oakland County Prosecutor **KAREN D. MCDONALD** [announced](#) the release of Special Prosecutor Beth Greenberg Morrow's report and recommendation to vacate the conviction of Juwan Deering.

The Special Prosecutor's report detailed newly discovered evidence that was not disclosed to the defense and that the jury never heard. McDonald will support a motion to vacate Mr. Deering's conviction, which is expected to be filed in Oakland County Circuit Court this week.

"In our system of justice, the Constitution protects all of us. Everyone has the right to a fair trial," McDonald said. "The Special Prosecutor found that Juwan Deering did not get a fair trial. She has recommended that his conviction and sentence be vacated, and I agree. I am committed to doing the right thing, and there is no question that this is the right thing."

On April 6, 2000, five children died in a house fire in Royal Oak Township. It was a terrible loss for the entire community, but the loss their parents experienced is unimaginable. Six years later Juwan Deering was convicted and sentenced to life in prison. That conviction was based in large part on the testimony of three jailhouse informants.

When she took office earlier this year, Prosecutor McDonald was contacted by the Michigan Innocence Clinic and advised that they were planning to file a habeas corpus petition in federal court. "When I reviewed the trial file, I found a letter written by one of the informants to the trial prosecutor asking for favors. This was alarming to me, and I immediately ordered a review of all the files where the informants had been charged with crimes by this office. In those files, there was important information that was not disclosed to the defense and that the jury never heard." McDonald discovered that two of the jailhouse informants had been used multiple times by law enforcement and prosecutors. Those informants were given plea bargains, their sentences were reduced, sometimes by many years, or their cases were outright dismissed for their cooperation before and after the Deering trial.

McDonald immediately notified and turned that information over to Mr. Deering's attorneys, and asked that a special prosecutor be appointed to investigate the case.

The Special Prosecutor spent 3 months and 300 hours thoroughly reviewing all reports, files, transcripts and evidence, and conducting her own investigation in conjunction with the Michigan State Police.

“What the Special Prosecutor found is extremely troubling. There was important information in our files and the investigation files that was not given to Mr. Deering’s attorney.” That information included newly discovered footage from a videotaped interview of one of the children who survived the fire.

“As prosecutors, we have an ethical obligation to turn over all of the evidence regardless of whether it is exculpatory or inculpatory. We have to do the right thing, even if it hurts our case. That didn’t happen here.”

“My office contacted the parents of the children who died and told them what we found, and what it meant. They have lived with the tragedy for two decades, and I can’t imagine the pain of having to relive it again and again.”

Mr. Deering’s attorneys are expected to file a motion this week asking Circuit Court Judge Jeffrey Matis to vacate Mr. Deering’s conviction and sentence.

“It is important for the public to know what happened, which is why I am releasing the Special Prosecutor’s Report and Recommendation. The Special Prosecutor found that Juwan Deering did not get a fair trial, and she’s right. She has recommended that his conviction and sentence be vacated, and I agree with her. I am committed to doing the right thing, and that is the right thing in this case.”

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CONTACT: Noah Arbit, Director of Communications
arbitn@oakgov.com