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Dhillon Law Group Files Federal Civil Rights Lawsuit Against Midland County Judge Terry Johnson Alleging Retaliatory Disclosure of Citizen's Social Security Number

Complaint Alleges Midland County Judge Used Official Access to Publicly Expose Sensitive Personal Information in Retaliation for Constitutionally Protected Journalism

MIDLAND, TEXAS — Dhillon Law Group, Inc. today announced that it has filed a federal civil rights lawsuit in the United States District Court for the Western District of Texas, Midland-Odessa Division, on behalf of Midland County resident and citizen journalist Christino Rodriquez, also known as “Nino America,” against Midland County Judge Terry Johnson.

The lawsuit alleges that Judge Johnson unlawfully used his official position and access to confidential government records to publicly disclose Mr. Rodriquez's most sensitive personal identifying information, including his full Social Security number, date of birth, and driver's license number, in retaliation for Mr. Rodriquez's publication of truthful, lawfully obtained court records concerning Midland County government.

According to the complaint, the disclosure occurred less than twenty-four hours after Mr. Rodriquez published federal court records relating to lawsuits involving Midland County. The complaint alleges that Judge Johnson posted an unredacted arrest warrant on social media, exposing confidential personal information allegedly obtained through government records unavailable to the general public.

The lawsuit asserts claims under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 for violations of the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution, the Driver's Privacy Protection Act, and multiple causes of action under Texas law. The complaint seeks compensatory damages, punitive damages, statutory damages, declaratory and injunctive relief, attorney's fees, costs, and such other relief as the Court deems just and proper.

Statement of James E. “Trey” Trainor, III, Partner, Dhillon Law Group

“This lawsuit is about far more than politics or a disagreement between two individuals. At its core, it asks whether a government official can use the authority and access of public office to retaliate against a citizen for engaging in constitutionally protected speech. Our complaint alleges that after Mr. Rodriquez published truthful, lawfully obtained court records concerning Midland County government, Judge Terry Johnson responded by publicly disclosing Mr.

Rodriguez’s most sensitive personal information, including his Social Security number, date of birth, and driver’s license number. If those allegations are proven, that conduct represents a profound abuse of governmental authority and is fundamentally incompatible with the Constitution and the public trust placed in elected officials.”

“The First Amendment exists to protect citizens who speak truth to power, not to protect those in power from criticism. Whether someone agrees with Mr. Rodriguez’s reporting is entirely beside the point. Every American should be deeply concerned if a government official can allegedly weaponize confidential government information against a political critic. Our constitutional system depends upon the ability of citizens and journalists to investigate, report on, and criticize government without fear of retaliation from those who hold public office.”

“This case is also about accountability. A Social Security number cannot simply be ‘taken back’ once it has been exposed to the internet. The harm can last a lifetime. Through this lawsuit, we intend not only to seek justice for our client, but also to reaffirm a fundamental principle of American government: no public official is above the law, and when government power is allegedly used to punish a citizen for exercising constitutional rights, the courts remain the place where accountability is demanded and the rule of law is preserved.”

The complaint further alleges that the public disclosure has permanently increased Mr. Rodriguez’s risk of identity theft, financial fraud, and other forms of identity-related harm, requiring ongoing identity monitoring and protection.

The case has been filed in the United States District Court for the Western District of Texas, Midland-Odessa Division (Civil Action No. 7:26-cv-284).

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Media Contact

James E. “Trey” Trainor, III

Partner

DHILLON LAW GROUP, INC.

2121 Eisenhower Avenue, Suite 608

Alexandria, VA 22314

Mobile: (512) 924-6501

jtrainor@dhillonlaw.com

About DHILLON LAW GROUP

Dhillon Law Group, Inc. is a nationally recognized litigation firm representing clients in constitutional law, civil rights, First Amendment litigation, election law, commercial litigation, employment matters, and other complex civil disputes throughout the United States.