

Statement Regarding My Arrest, Prosecution, and Subsequent Dismissal

Events of June 20

I am a veterinarian with 26 years of clinical experience. I am board-certified in veterinary radiology and completed residency training in wildlife medicine and pathology.

Throughout my career, I have diagnosed the causes of illness and death in both companion animals and wildlife. A recurring cause of injury and death—particularly in wildlife—is human-generated litter. Animals frequently ingest discarded trash, resulting in intestinal obstruction, toxicity, or other life-threatening complications. Wildlife also commonly suffer injury or death through entanglement in discarded materials.

Because of my professional background, removing litter from the environment has become second nature to me. When I encounter trash that can be safely removed and properly disposed of, I routinely do so. On June 20, my actions were entirely consistent with that lifelong professional habit and my concern for protecting wildlife and public spaces.

On June 20, I was walking along the edge of the Reflecting Pool when I noticed some litter. I picked it up with the intention of disposing of it properly in a nearby trash can. As I was doing so, I noticed a family taking photographs and offered to take a picture so that everyone could be included. Before taking the photograph, I placed the litter into the small bag that I was carrying.

The family was standing near an area of the Reflecting Pool where, close to the shoreline, the blue coating was completely absent, exposing the underlying concrete. Farther from shore, additional sections of the blue coating were visibly peeling away. Between these two areas was a floating, unattached piece of debris. Believing it to be litter, I reached into the water to retrieve it so that I could dispose of it with the other trash I had already collected. At no point did I believe that retrieving floating debris was prohibited or could constitute a criminal offense.

While I was continuing to chat with the family, I was approached by a United States Marshal, who asked whether I had just put my hand into the Reflecting Pool. I answered truthfully that I had and explained that I had done so to retrieve a floating piece of trash. I handed the debris to him. The Marshal responded that he wished I had not done that because he would now have to arrest me.

I fully complied with every instruction given by law enforcement. Despite my

cooperation, I was immediately handcuffed, surrounded by more than fifteen law enforcement officers, and separated from the family and other individuals who had witnessed the events firsthand. I was confused and frightened. I was not advised of my rights, nor, as I was placed into a transport van, was I informed under whose jurisdiction I was being detained or where I was being taken.

As I was handcuffed and led away several eyewitnesses immediately informed law enforcement that they had observed the entire incident, possessed video and photographic evidence, and believed I had done nothing wrong. To my knowledge, officers declined to obtain their names, contact information, or evidence despite those witnesses making themselves available. Because those witnesses were offering information that appeared to be exculpatory, I remain deeply concerned that this evidence was not collected or preserved.

While I was detained, I was told that being in possession of paint was an offense serious enough to warrant jail. However, I was ultimately charged with damage to government property. From the outset, I knew that allegation to be false because I had not damaged government property.

The Weeks That Followed

The consequences of the arrest and prosecution were immediate and significant. I incurred substantial legal expenses defending myself against allegations that were ultimately dismissed.

My professional practice suffered a noticeable decline in business from several clients during this period.

The stress and anxiety associated with the criminal prosecution were profound and were accompanied by physical manifestations.

I was publicly humiliated after being characterized by the White House as a "sick vandal" before any adjudication of the facts. These statements were made despite the apparent existence of evidence contradicting the allegations and despite information indicating that the deteriorating condition of the Reflecting Pool was already known to government officials.

The prosecution also imposed significant professional burdens. I lost substantial working hours attending remote court proceedings and traveling to Washington, D.C., solely to comply with court requirements, including appearing in person to present identification.

As a parent, one of the most difficult aspects of this experience was trying to protect my daughter from the emotional consequences of the public allegations and criminal proceedings.

In addition, I experienced overwhelming stress from the constant barrage of media inquiries, including repeated telephone calls and text messages.

Broader Concerns

Based on information that has since become public, I believe several broader issues warrant independent review.

First, it appears that, at a minimum, officials within the Department of the Interior were aware before June 20 that the Reflecting Pool was actively deteriorating and that there was no evidence establishing that vandalism had occurred.

Second, if contact with peeling paint from the Reflecting Pool had become prohibited or subject to criminal enforcement, members of the public were not provided adequate notice.

On June 20, there was no signage warning visitors not to touch the Reflecting Pool or advising that contact with loose material in the pool could result in criminal enforcement. Conduct that had previously been permitted, or at least tolerated, suddenly became the basis for arrest without any apparent public notice. This raises serious concerns regarding the constitutional principle of fair notice and the protections afforded by due process.

The circumstances create the appearance that members of the public could unknowingly be subjected to citation or arrest for conduct they had no reason to believe was criminal.

I am also concerned that highly public statements by the President, the White House, members of Congress, and portions of the media fostered a public presumption of guilt before any evidence had been presented in court. Such statements are difficult to reconcile with the presumption of innocence and the Fifth Amendment guarantee of due process. At a minimum, they created a substantial risk of prejudicing public perception while criminal proceedings were pending.

Finally, I have significant concerns regarding the handling of exculpatory evidence during the prosecution. My attorney attempted to contact the prosecution to provide exculpatory evidence. According to my understanding, those communications initially went unanswered. When communication finally occurred, my attorney was reprimanded rather than encouraged to provide information relevant to the truth of the allegations.

In addition, my attorney repeatedly requested discovery that was not produced despite multiple requests. Although I cannot know the prosecutors' subjective intentions, my experience left me with the strong impression that the focus remained on obtaining a conviction rather than objectively evaluating all available evidence. That perception is especially troubling because prosecutors have an ethical obligation to seek justice, including considering and disclosing material exculpatory evidence, rather than simply pursuing convictions.

The dismissal of my case reinforces my belief that these events deserve careful, independent review—not only because of the harm caused to me personally, but also because of the broader implications for due process, prosecutorial fairness, and public confidence in the administration of justice.

