



BREAKING: Whistleblowing Precinct One Constables Allege Retaliation in Aftermath of Jack Abercia Indictment

By John Nova Lomax

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Two Precinct One Harris County Constables have filed suit against Harris County and their immediate supervisor, Constable Kenneth Berry, successor to indicted former chief Jack Abercia.

In both of the suits filed yesterday, plaintiffs Sergeant Kevin Williams (formerly of the Civil Division) and Mark Harrison (formerly an Internal Affairs investigator) claim that they have been demoted, reassigned and otherwise harassed after they went to the FBI with information implicating Abercia and two staffers in a bribery/unauthorized use of police information scheme.

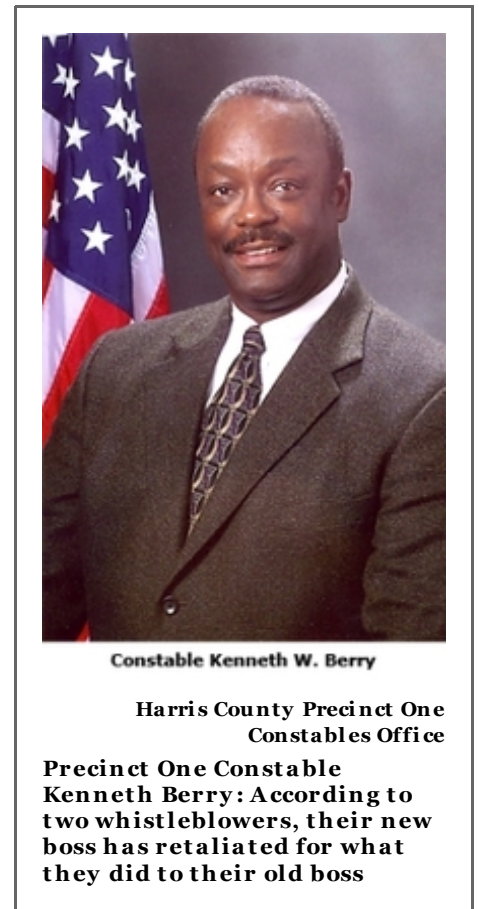
Lead counsel for both plaintiffs is Phillip Hilder, best-known for his representation of perhaps the city's most renowned whistleblower ever -- Sherron Watkins of Enron fame. Both suits allege unlawful discrimination and retaliation and seek injunctive and equitable relief, job reinstatement, future pecuniary losses, damages for emotional pain and suffering, actual and exemplary damages, attorneys' fees and court costs.

Williams claims that on April 13, roughly three months after the January 12 federal indictments of Abercia, chief deputy Michael Butler, and lieutenant Weldon Wiener, he was reassigned and demoted against his will from the Civil Division to the Mental Health Division. He also claims that he has been subject to a "pattern of retaliation and petty harassment," including reassignment and having his office moved closer to those of his supervisors, "for the purpose of intimidation and constraining Williams's activities," according to the suit.

Harrison's claims are even more explosive.

He alleges that he only went to the FBI after the Public Integrity Office of the Harris County District Attorney's Office failed to act when he brought his investigation to their attention.

Harrison was a six-year veteran of the Internal Affairs division, but according to the suit, his tenure



came to an end on April 13, when he was reassigned / demoted to Patrol. He also claims to be on the receiving end of a pattern of retaliation and petty harassment. The suit also claims that his scheduled March 24 promotion to sergeant was summarily revoked.

According to the 13-count federal indictment unsealed in January, 41-year-veteran Abercia and Wiener solicited cash from private companies in return for their running of unauthorized background checks on prospective employees. Those probes were allegedly conducted via the National Crime Information Center database, which is restricted to official use by law enforcement.

The indictment goes on to allege that Abercia and Butler hired an unqualified applicant to the Constables' squad in exchange for a \$5,000 bribe.

Abercia has pleaded not guilty and has hired Rusty Hardin to represent him.

We have calls in to Phillip Hilder's office and county attorney Vince Ryan, and we will update with more details as they come in.

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