



OFFICE OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY

ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY, MARYLAND



Anne Colt Leitess, State's Attorney

Anne Arundel Justice

A Monthly News Digest from the Office of the State's Attorney for Anne Arundel County

A Message from Anne Arundel County State's Attorney Anne Colt Leitess

Greetings

Happy New Year! 2021 will be the year for renewal and hope in our country.

I hope during the holiday season each of you were able to safely gather in-person or virtually with family and friends. I am grateful that 2021 has brought the promise of a vaccine and that this terrible virus that has killed hundreds of thousands of our fellow Americans will be contained this year. A return to “normalcy” for me will be doing simple things like spending time with friends, traveling to see family and just having the chance to enjoy each other again. I look forward to resolving several cases that have been pushed back and delayed multiple times this past year so that our office can provide a sense of closure and peace for victims and survivors of crime.

The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly altered life as we all know it, and has certainly made it very challenging to resolve criminal cases in the courtroom while also keeping everyone safe. During the short six week time period that jury trials were permitted in Maryland this past fall, the Anne Arundel County State's Attorney's Office tried 16 criminal cases—more than any other jurisdiction in the State. We did it with plexiglass partitions, extreme social distancing in the courtroom, masks that made us sound muffled and a whole lot of patience. Our office worked with the Office of the Public Defender and the Courts to ensure that only the most serious offenders who posed a danger to others or were a flight risk were detained in our local detention center during the COVID-19 emergency. We've had a few cases charged involving attacks on workers who've asked store patrons to wear masks, and even a few defendants charged with intentionally trying to expose others to the virus.

In the State's Attorney's Office, we continue to be available during normal business hours by telephone and email to serve the citizens of Anne Arundel County. We have a daily duty attorney assigned to answer questions the public may have and our trial attorneys and victim witness advocates can be reached as well. Unfortunately, the uptick in COVID-19

cases led the Administrative Office of the Courts to announce that the Courts are returning back to Phase II of the Phase V process. Under Phase II, the court has instituted limited in-person proceedings through March 14, 2021 and jury trials have been suspended until April 23, 2021. We still have hearings via the telephone for bail reviews, guilty pleas and other matters in the Circuit Court. In the District Court, our attorneys are trying domestic violence, assault and driving while impaired cases, in person, and are working to ensure that victims of violent crime are protected during this time. The new administrative orders can be found on the Maryland Judiciary's website.

In this month's newsletter, you'll learn about the man who after killing his friend, attempted to kill two county police officers. You will hear about the Pasadena man sentenced for sexually assaulting two young family members. We're always updating our website and social media platforms with the latest information so please be sure to follow us on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook at:

AnneArundelSAO on Instagram and Twitter

Anne Arundel County State's Attorney's Office on Facebook

Thank you for your **continued support!**

Pasadena Man Pleads Guilty to First Degree Murder of Christopher Jones and Attempted First Degree Murder in Shooting of Two Anne Arundel County Detectives

Joseph Willis, 22, of Pasadena entered a guilty plea to first degree murder in the death of Christopher Jones and to two counts of attempted first degree murder of Anne Arundel County Detectives William S. Ballard and Ian Preece, announced Anne Arundel County State's Attorney Anne Colt Leitess.

"Joseph Willis stole Christopher Jones from his family and then tried to kill two county officers who pulled him over as he fled in Jones' car. I hope that his guilty plea provides some solace to both Mr. Jones' family and the community at large who were impacted by this crime. I'm grateful that Detectives Ballard and Preece, who were protecting and serving our community at the time they were shot, will continue to recover as well as they have. I would like to thank the Anne Arundel County Police Department and the other partnering local agencies - the Maryland State Police, Natural Resources Police and Baltimore City Police - for their hard work and assistance in investigating this case and preparing it for trial," said State's Attorney Anne Colt Leitess.

Mr. Willis will be sentenced in 2021 where he faces up to three consecutive life sentences.

State's Attorney Anne Colt Leitess and Assistant State's Attorney Jason Steinhardt prosecuted the case on behalf of the citizens of Anne Arundel County.

Click here to read more.

Sex Offender Received 30 Years for Sexually Assaulting his Step-Granddaughter and Grand-Niece

Anne Arundel County State's Attorney Anne Colt Leitess announced that Robert Contic, age 63, was sentenced to 30 years in prison for sexually abusing both his step-granddaughter and his grand-niece. The Maryland Sentencing Guidelines called for Contic to receive sentences of between five and ten years in prison for each offense, but prosecutors sought increased penalties due to the heinous nature of his crimes. The Honorable Mark Crooks, presiding judge, agreed with the State and decided that the guidelines were woefully inadequate for punishing the defendant for his betrayal of trust while the children were in his care.

Contic entered a guilty plea to third degree sex offense in one case and received a 10-year sentence. In the second case, the defendant sexually abused his step-granddaughter over the 2019 Memorial Day weekend and pled guilty to sex abuse of a minor, receiving a consecutive sentence of 25 years, with five years suspended. His total sentence was 30 years overall for the two crimes.

"Contic preyed upon his own family members who were vulnerable and at his mercy," said State's Attorney Anne Colt Leitess. "Because of the combined efforts of the Anne Arundel County Police Department and the prosecutor in this case, the defendant will no longer be able to harm these innocent victims, or any other child. I would like to let every survivor of sexual assault know that it's never too late to report a crime of sex abuse. If you or someone you know is a victim of sexual assault, contact the Sexual Assault Crisis Center and Hotline at 410-222-6800."

On October 22, 2019, the Anne Arundel County Police Department was notified by the Queen Anne's County Sheriff's Office of a juvenile victim who was sexually abused by Robert Contic, the child's great-uncle. On November 8, 2019, the child was interviewed at the Anne Arundel County Child Advocacy Center and disclosed sexual abuse by the defendant that had occurred in Anne Arundel County.

In a separate case, on June 14, 2019, an Anne Arundel County police officer responded to Howard County General Hospital where he met with a ten-year old child and her mother. The child reported that she had been sexually abused by the defendant, her step-grandfather, Robert Contic, while spending the weekend with him and her grandmother at their residence in Anne Arundel County. She was later interviewed at the Child Advocacy Center, where the child gave further details regarding the abuse that occurred during the Memorial Day weekend in 2019 at their home.

Assistant State's Attorney Mary-Ann Burkhart prosecuted the case on behalf of the citizens of Anne Arundel County.

