

NEWS > CONNECTICUT NEWS

Two men wrongfully imprisoned for nearly two decades agree to largest settlement in CT history



STEVE MILLER / AP



By **JUSTIN MUSZYNSKI** | jmuszynski@courant.com | Hartford Courant

PUBLISHED: August 13, 2026 at 1:35 PM EDT

Two men who each wrongfully spent nearly two decades behind bars for a robbery in New Haven that led to a fatal shooting have agreed to a settlement worth more than \$30 million — the largest wrongful conviction settlement in Connecticut history.

The agreement reached Tuesday resolves federal civil rights lawsuits brought by Vernon Horn and Marquis Jackson against the [city of New Haven](#), according to Mayor Justin Elicker and the firm that represented Horn. Each man will receive \$15.25 million under the terms of the agreement.

“No amount of money can give me back the 17 years that were taken from me,” Horn said in a statement issued Emery, Celli, Brinckerhoff, Abady, Ward & Maazel, LLP. “I lost years with my family, I lost people I loved while I was in prison, and I missed precious time with my daughter that I can never get back. But I never stopped fighting to prove that I was innocent, even when it felt like no one wanted to hear the truth.”

“No person should ever serve time in prison for a crime they did not commit,” Elicker said in a statement announcing the settlement, noting that Horn [spent 17 years in prison](#) and Jackson was imprisoned for 19 years — “time they can never get back.

“While these incidents happened more than two decades ago, and no amount of money can give them back the years they’ve lost, as a city we still have an obligation to do what we think is right, to account for any miscarriage of justice and to provide Mr. Horn and Mr. Jackson with some sense of peace moving forward,” Elicker continued. “I was not mayor at the time when these incidents occurred 25 years ago, but I am the mayor today. As mayor, I am deeply sorry for what Mr. Horn and Mr. Jackson have gone through and experienced. They were New Haven residents like us, with their entire lives in front of them, and I hope these settlements will now help them put this difficult chapter behind them and move forward.”

On Jan. 24, 1999, three masked gunmen robbed the Dixwell Deli and fatally shot 22-year-old customer Caprice Hardy. Horn was 17 years old at the time. He and Marquis were later arrested, convicted and each sentenced to 70 years in prison for a crime they did not commit.

According to the lawsuit and the firm that represented Horn, investigators with the New Haven Police Department withheld exculpatory evidence and coerced witnesses during the investigation.

A cellphone stolen during the robbery was a central piece of evidence used in the prosecution. According to the lawsuit, prosecutors introduced testimony connecting Horn to the phone despite calls that were made from the device pointing toward a number of Bridgeport residents.

According to the civil complaint, the Connecticut Federal Defender Office reinvestigated the case in January 2018 and obtained 137 pages of previously undisclosed phone records and similar documents that a former New Haven detective had kept in her basement. The records contained “materially exculpatory evidence” that had never been provided to prosecutors or Horn’s defense.

The reinvestigation also uncovered cell-site information suggesting the phone calls made from the stolen cellphone came from Bridgeport and not New Haven. An FBI analysis also undermined the prosecution’s account of how the stolen phone had been used and the connection to Horn that was falsely claimed.

In April 2018, the State’s Attorney’s Office moved to vacate the convictions in light of the new information. A judge vacated the convictions and dismissed the cases, allowing Horn and Marquis to be released from prison. The civil rights lawsuits were filed later that year.

In his statement, Horn thanked his lawyers, family, Elicker, the judge who mediated the settlement talks and others who helped work for his freedom.

“I am grateful to everyone who stood beside me and kept fighting for me,” Horn said.

“Vernon Horn lost 17 years of freedom for a crime he had nothing to do with,” said Ilann M. Maazel, a partner at Emery, Celli, Brinckerhoff, Abady, Ward & Maazel, LLP. “The New Haven Police Department coerced witnesses, fabricated evidence and buried exonerative evidence in the basement of a detective’s home. Shame on them. They almost destroyed this man’s life and finally are facing some accountability. We’re proud of Vernon for standing strong and never giving up in his fight for justice.”

“Vernon Horn fought tirelessly for his freedom for nearly two decades. He then fought for seven years to hold the city of New Haven and its corrupt police officers accountable for robbing him of what should have been the prime of his life,” said Nick Bourland, an associate attorney at the firm. “This landmark settlement speaks to the seriousness of the harm Mr. Horn suffered and will help him focus on his future.”

Elicker noted that wrongdoings by police do not involve anyone still with the police department.

“Every day, our officers strive to adhere and hold themselves to the highest professional and policing standards and put their lives on the line to protect and serve our residents and keep our community safe,” Elicker said.

According to Elicker, the city will have to pay Horn and Marquis \$12.75 million each, with the rest coming from insurance coverage. The city will look to issue bonds to help cover the costs, he said.

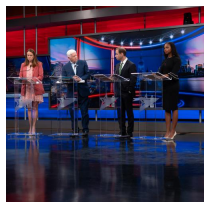
Five Things You Need To Know: Sign up now for the latest coverage in Connecticut each morning.

SIGN UP

By signing up, you agree to our [Terms of Use](#), [Privacy Policy](#), and to receive emails from Hartford Courant.

“As a city, we have been working very hard in recent years to address the historical financial challenges that we inherited from past administrations and have been making steady progress in putting our city on much firmer financial footing,” Elicker said. “This decision was a difficult one to make. However, we must account for the actions and decisions made by past administrations while also balancing the city’s legal and financial responsibilities today and upholding our values of fairness and justice for our residents.”

MORE FROM OUR NEWSROOM



Bronin declares victory over Larson in historic 4-way...

Tuesday, August 11



Tempers flare as CT city passes \$535K staffing contingency...

Wednesday, August 12



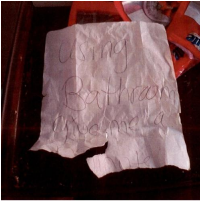
A \$14 million revamp of a CT resort is drawing rave review...

Tuesday, August 11



Longtime UConn women's basketball reporter dies at 68

Wednesday, August 12



A CT inmate died by suicide in prison. Why a correction...

Thursday, August 13



House fire prompts mutual aid response in Rocky Hill

Thursday, August 13



Reward offered after two dead pit bulls found in garbage ba...

Tuesday, August 11



One person seriously injured in crash involving e-bike in...

Tuesday, August 11

Watch Live: Lindsay Clancy trial, Day 13, with updates

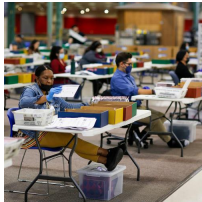


Thursday, August 13



Transgender girl sues coaches, Sacramento State over...

Thursday, August 13



Trump again asks Supreme Court to save USPS mail ball...

Thursday, August 13



Nick Reiner faces new charges in slayings of Hollywood icon...

Wednesday, August 12

SPONSORED CONTENT

Sponsored Video by usa.canon.com [↗](#)

BY [USA.CANON.COM](#) —

2026 >
August >
13

