



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACT: Joyce Cunningham, 512-452-0645
ext. 130
jcunningham@texasnurses.org.

Mary McNamara, 301-628-5198
mary.mcnamara@ana.org
www.nursingworld.org/rnrealnews/

MEDIA ALERT:

JUSTICE SERVED -- WINKLER COUNTY SHERIFF FOUND GUILTY
OF RETALIATING AGAINST NURSES

Silver Spring, MD – The American Nurses Association (ANA) and the Texas Nurses Association (TNA) hailed the guilty verdict in the criminal case against Winkler County Sheriff Robert Roberts who retaliated against two registered nurses for reporting patient care concerns about a physician’s practice to the Texas Medical Board. After a week of testimony, it took the Midland County jury less than two hours to find the sheriff guilty of four felony counts and two misdemeanor counts.

“Justice has been served with the jury’s guilty on-all-counts verdict for Sheriff Roberts,” stated Clair Jordan, MSN, RN, executive director of TNA. “When the safety and rights of patients are threatened, nurses must be able to speak out for them without fear of retaliation. This verdict affirms that retaliation against a nurse for patient advocacy efforts won’t be tolerated and those who do will be held fully accountable.”

“This is a victory for patients who trust nurses to be their advocates, and for nurses who play a critical, duty-bound role in protecting patients in their care,” said ANA President Karen A. Daley, PhD, MPH, RN, FAAN.

As the nation's largest nursing association, ANA joined forces with TNA, one of its state nurses associations, in July of 2009 to strongly criticize and raise the alarm about the criminal charges brought against two Texas nurses and the fact that the results of the case could have a lasting and negative impact on future nurses speaking out as patient advocates.

TNA members and long-time nurses Anne Mitchell, RN, and Vicki Galle, RN, both not only lost their jobs but also faced criminal charges of misuse of official information when they reported a physician to the Texas Medical Board over patient safety concerns. The charges were eventually dropped against Galle, and a jury found Mitchell not guilty in less than an hour. Known as the "Winkler County nurses," their plight drew national attention and tremendous support from nurses and others concerned about patient advocacy and safety.

Sheriff Roberts was convicted on June 14th of retaliation and misuse of official information, both felonies, and official oppression, a misdemeanor. Roberts was sentenced to four years of felony probation and 100 days in jail on the official information and retaliation charges, and fined \$6,000. He must also surrender his peace officer license and be removed from office.

Trials for the Winkler County Attorney Scott Tidwell and the physician, Dr. Rolando Arafiles, are still pending.

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ABOUT THE TEXAS NURSES ASSOCIATION (TNA):

Texas Nurses Association (www.texasnurses.org) is a professional organization of registered nurses, and the only Texas constituent member association of the American Nurses Association. Texas Nurses Association seeks to promote excellence in nursing by helping nurses achieve quality patient care through high standards of practice, legislative involvement, and public policy advocacy.

ABOUT THE AMERICAN NURSES ASSOCIATION (ANA):

The American Nurses Association (ANA) is the only full-service professional organization representing the interests of the nation's 3.1 million registered nurses through its constituent and state nurses associations and its organizational affiliates. ANA advances the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing practice, promoting the rights of nurses in the workplace, projecting a positive and realistic view of nursing, and by lobbying the Congress and regulatory agencies on health care issues affecting nurses and the public.