

NEWS RELEASE

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Trials, pleas result in convictions of 3 habitual impaired drivers

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – The Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Misdemeanor Appeals Team convicted six impaired drivers, including three habitual impaired drivers, during a recent trial session in Superior Court. These defendants were either found guilty by a jury, pled guilty or remanded their cases to District Court for sentencing. The proceedings were held January 3-10, 2017, before The Honorable Eric L. Levinson, The Honorable W. Robert Bell and The Honorable Lisa C. Bell, Superior Court Judges.

The Misdemeanor Appeals Team prosecutes cases in which the defendant was convicted in District Court and then appeals his or her conviction to Superior Court for a jury trial, as allowed under North Carolina law. The team also prosecutes habitual impaired driving charges, which are felony offenses.

Douglas Trent Jordan, 28, was tried for habitual impaired driving. A jury found Jordan *guilty* as charged. Judge W. Robert Bell sentenced Jordan to 21-35 months in prison. In March 2016, Charlotte-Mecklenburg police located a car stopped in the roadway with Jordan behind the wheel and unconscious. The engine was running, and the car was in gear. Officers put the car in park, removed the keys and woke Jordan. Jordan, who was previously convicted of driving while impaired in 2007, 2011 and 2012, had a blood alcohol concentration of .12.

Reginald Landrum, 45, was tried for 1) habitual impaired driving, 2) driving while license revoked, 3) possession of an open container, 4) reckless driving and 5) failure to heed lights or siren. A jury found Landrum *guilty* as charged. Judge Levinson sentenced Landrum to 19-32 months in prison. That sentence will be served consecutively to the federal prison sentence that Landrum is currently serving.

Just before his trial began, Shamus Thompson, 36, pled guilty to 1) speeding and 2) reckless driving. He was then tried for driving while impaired. A jury was unable to reach a unanimous verdict. As a result, Judge Levinson declared a mistrial as to the driving while impaired charge. For the speeding and reckless driving offenses, Judge Levinson sentenced Thompson to 45 days in the Mecklenburg County Jail; that sentence was suspended pending his successful completion of 14 months of unsupervised probation. As conditions of his probation, Thompson must serve 4 days in jail, perform 24 hours of community service and pay a \$250 fine.

Anthony Lowry, 56, pled guilty to habitual impaired driving. Judge Lisa C. Bell sentenced Lowry to 17-30 months in prison.

Note: Misdemeanors and infractions are originally prosecuted in district court in North Carolina. In criminal district court, a judge determines guilt, not a jury; this is commonly referred to as a “bench trial.” However, defendants have a right to appeal a conviction from the district court to the superior court for a trial de novo. The new trial in superior court must be a jury trial, not a bench trial. In a de novo trial, the jury cannot be informed that a district court judge previously found the defendant guilty; further, a record of any evidence, including testimony, from district court may not be introduced. While the DA’s Office prosecutes nearly 225,000 misdemeanors and infractions each year in district court in Mecklenburg County, each defendant is entitled to exercise his/her right to appeal to the superior court. When a misdemeanor or infraction occupies the limited time available in our superior courtrooms, it the intent of the DA’s Office to keep the public informed of the results through news releases like this one. Due to the volume of misdemeanors and infractions prosecuted in district court each day, reports like this are not possible for all of those cases.

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