

Amy Marion Secures Multi-Million Dollar Settlement for Client Wrongfully Convicted Due to Prosecutorial Misconduct

FEATURED ATTORNEY



Amy B. Marion

Partner

NEWSDAY: Suffolk County Lawsuit Settlements Top \$29 Million — Abrams Fensterman LLP Partner, [Amy Marion](#), represents client in settlement. Read the full article on [Newsday.com](#).

TOP STORIES

SUFFOLK LAWSUIT

Figure expected to be eclipsed by deals this year

ONLY IN NEWSDAY

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Suffolk County paid out \$29.5 million in 2023 to settle lawsuits — including at least \$13.1 million in cases involving police or prosecutorial actions — a nearly fourfold increase compared with 2022, records obtained by Newsday show.

Settlement payouts reached \$29,494,636 last year, compared with \$7.7 million in 2022, according to documents obtained by Newsday through a Freedom of Information Law request along with the annual budget report of the Suffolk County Legislature's Office of Budget Review.

The county paid out \$10.7 million in settlements in 2019, \$2.7 million in 2020 and \$17.9 million in 2021, when \$16 million went to Keith Bush, who spent 33 years in prison for a 1975 North Bellport murder he did not commit.

Suffolk officials offered no detailed explanation for the large increase in settlement payouts last year.

But Suffolk County Executive Edward P. Romaine, a Republican who took office in January, has blamed former Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone.



Suffolk County Executive Edward P. Romaine is trying to clear potential case settlements to improve the county's credit rating.

ments. Reserve funds covered all settlements in 2022 and 2023, when Bellone still was in office, county officials said. In prior years, Suffolk had relied primarily on borrowing to cover settlements.

In Bellone's final two years, the county was flush with cash due in part to about \$500 million in federal pandemic aid and higher-than-expected sales tax revenue. The county has about \$65 million in a reserve fund to cover legal claims and insurance.

"The county will continue to use the reserve funds in lieu of borrowing until the funds have been exhausted or there is a settlement that exceeds available appropriations," Romaine spokesman Mike Martino said in a statement to Newsday.

Tallies for Nassau County

Supreme Court Justice William Condon had found Suffolk prosecutors withheld 45 items of evidence from Lawrence's defense attorneys. Lawrence had served 6 years of a 75-year-to-life sentence when the charges were thrown out.

Lawrence was charged in April on unrelated felony weapons charges and has pleaded not guilty. Lawrence declined to comment through his attorney, Amy Marion, a partner with the law firm Abrams Fensterman LLP in Lake Success.

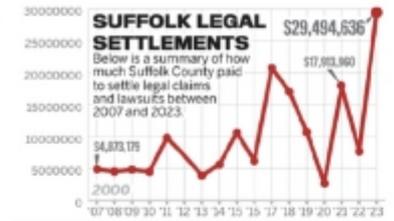
Other large payouts in 2023 included:

- \$1.5 million to John Oliva, a former Suffolk County police detective whose conviction for leaking information to a Newsday reporter was overturned in 2021.

TOP SETTLEMENTS



Shawn Lawrence, second from left, settled for \$3.85 million after prosecutorial



SOURCE: DOCUMENTS PROVIDED TO NEWSDAY BY SUFFOLK COUNTY

cruiser on a Deer Park sidewalk in 2014. Another vehicle had hit the cruiser, propelling it off the street.

Records show only one \$1 million payout in 2022: \$1.5 million to the family of Craig Schiffer, of East Meadow, who died after a Suffolk police cruiser hit him as he crossed a street in Islip in 2014.

More coming this year

Total payouts are expected to rise to more than \$35 million in 2024 due, in part, to two recent settlements of more than \$10 million each.

The family of Kenny Lazo will get \$20 million in an

agreement reached under Romaine's administration. Lazo, of Bay Shore, died after he was beaten by county police in 2008. His settlement came seven months after a jury had awarded his family \$35 million and the county sought to overturn the judgment. Half the payout will be covered by the county's insurance carrier, county officials said.

Rodolfo Taylor, formerly of Central Islip, will get \$12.8 million under an agreement reached at the end of Bellone's tenure. Taylor spent nearly 26 years in prison for a series of gas station robberies but later had his conviction overturned.

Rodolfo Taylor

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