

Governor Thompson Quoted Regarding New Hearings Sought in Chicago Police Torture Case

AUGUST 10, 2011

Gov. James Thompson, Winston & Strawn's senior chairman, was quoted in an *Associated Press* article titled "New hearings sought in Chicago police torture case," published in *FoxNews* and highlighted in other media outlets, including the *Chicago Tribune*.

The article explains a closely-watched request for new hearings filed with the Illinois Supreme Court by attorney Locke Bowman, legal director of the MacArthur Justice Center at Northwestern University, on behalf of fifteen incarcerated men who claim their confessions were coerced from them as a result of torture tactics used by convicted and former-Chicago police Lt. Jon Burge and other officers. Thompson and more than 60 current and former prosecutors, judges and lawmakers – including Winston chairman Dan Webb – signed on the friend of the court brief, which was filed in the pending case of Stanley Wrice, an inmate who has been claiming since 1982 that he also falsely confessed to a sexual assault and only after Burge's officers beat him. Wrice, 57, is serving a 100-year sentence. Attorneys say he's one of the longest-serving inmates with a Burge torture claim.

At issue before Justices is whether a coerced confession can ever be considered "harmless error" in a criminal trial, the newspaper said. The special prosecutor's office that's handling Wrice's case has argued that a conviction could stand — even if it involved a coerced confession — if the person could have been proven guilty without the confession.

Burge's name has become synonymous with allegations of police abuse in the city, as more than 100 men have alleged Burge and his men tortured them from the 1970s to the 1990s. Burge was convicted last year of lying about whether he ever witnessed or participated in the torture of suspects and is serving a 4 1/2-year sentence at Butner Federal Correctional Complex in North Carolina. He never has faced criminal charges for abuse. He was fired from the police department in 1993 over widely-publicized charges relating to the 1982 interrogation of Andrew Wilson, a suspect later convicted of killing two police officers.

The MacArthur Justice Center's brief "gives the Illinois Supreme Court the opportunity to finally and firmly repudiate the Burge era of the Chicago Police Department" and allegations of police improprieties associated with it, said Thompson. The Supreme Court could hear oral arguments in the *Wrice* case as early as mid-September.

Thompson said that while the hearings will take time and money, "the end is worth it."

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