

County borrowing \$10 million to pay pair wrongfully convicted of rape

Two men spent 17 years in prison for crime they didn't commit

By **Stephanie Rice**, Columbian Vancouver city government reporter

Published: October 22, 2013, 3:49 PM

5



Alan Northrop, left, and Larry Davis celebrate in July 2010 outside a Clark County courtroom after a Superior Court judge dismissed charges against them in a 1993 rape conviction on the basis of new DNA evidence that pointed to different assailants. Clark County on Friday agreed to pay \$10.5 million of its own money to settle a federal lawsuit by the two men. (Photo by [Troy Wayrynen](#) ([/staff/troy-wayrynen/](#)))

[Buy this photo \(/photos/2013/sep/30/73127/\)](#)

Clark County will take out a \$10 million loan to pay a settlement to two men who spent 17 years in prison after being wrongfully convicted of rape.

Earlier, the county agreed to pay \$10.5 million (\$5.25 million apiece) to Larry Davis, 57, of Vancouver and Alan Northrop, 49, of Woodland, to settle a federal lawsuit.

On Tuesday, county commissioners approved a financing plan to take out a seven-year loan for \$10 million from Banc of America Preferred Funding Corp. at 1.85 percent interest. Clark County Deputy Treasurer John Payne said the additional \$500,000 will come out of the county's general fund. Taking out a loan avoids having the general fund take such a large hit, as it pays for public safety and other essential county services that have already been budgeted.

The county has 30 days to pay the settlement, which was reached nine days into a jury trial in U.S. District Court in Tacoma.

The county will pay \$711,183 in interest, said Larry Frueh, finance manager for the treasurer's office.

The county filed a claim with its insurer, Washington Counties Risk Pool, but it was rejected because the county wasn't insured in 1993.

That year, Davis and Northrop were convicted of raping a woman in La Center. The woman had provided very few details about the suspects to the Clark County Sheriff's Office. She said she had been tied up and blindfolded while she was cleaning a house, and one man had raped her while another man held her down.

With help from the Innocence Project Northwest and a judge's order to do post-conviction DNA tests, Davis and Northrop were eventually able to force the county to do the testing.

The evidence, taken from the victim's fingernails and pubic hair, hadn't been tested back in 1993 because of the lack of technology to test small amounts.

When test results came back in 2010 showing DNA from two other men, a Clark County Superior Court judge vacated the convictions and the Clark County Prosecutor's Office declined to re-file charges.

Costly deputy

The decision to settle was made in late September, when former Clark County Sheriff's deputy Don Slagle, who was the lead detective on the case, was on the witness stand.

Attorneys for Davis and Northrop argued the county was negligent in employing Slagle, who never checked out other leads in the Davis/Northrop case.

Davis and Northrop were represented by Jack Connolly of Tacoma and Tim Ford of Seattle.

In the lawsuit, attorneys wrote, "Larry Davis and Alan Northrop were accused of committing a crime which they did not commit and then, when the evidence showed that they were not the right suspects, their constitutional rights were violated over and over again by an aggressive detective who was dead set on convicting these two innocent men. They were subject to humiliation, fear, scorn, and ridicule as alleged rapists. Larry Davis and Alan Northrop spent over 17 years in prison for crimes they did not commit. They lost their entire young manhood. They were kept away from their families, lost loved ones, missed children growing up, and lost their chance for a normal life. Their parents and loved ones passed away without ever knowing of their vindication."

Slagle retired from the county in 2006 when he turned 53, the minimum retirement age, and returned to his hometown of Carthage, Tenn.

While the \$10.5 million payment represents by far the largest settlement the county has paid for cases involving Slagle, it's not the first.

In 2005, he was featured in The Columbian as part of a series, "Policing Force," that examined how often law enforcement officers are disciplined for using excessive force and what agencies do with repeat offenders.

By 2005, Slagle had been disciplined 16 times and the subject of more than three dozen internal affairs investigations.

Slagle explained his number of complaints by saying he was an active deputy with a high number of arrests. He also spent years as an entry man for the SWAT team.

In all, the county paid \$426,000 to settle claims and medical bills involving people who'd had interactions with Slagle, including a woman he shot by accident.

[Stephanie Rice \(/staff/stephanie-rice/\)](#)



Columbian Vancouver city government reporter

☎ 360-735-4508

👤 @col_cityhall (https://twitter.com/col_cityhall)

✉ [Send an Email \(mailto:stephanie.rice@columbian.com\)](mailto:stephanie.rice@columbian.com)

More Like This

[Clark County to pay wrongly convicted men \\$10.5M \(/news/2013/sep/30/wrongly-convicted-men-lawsuit-clark-county/\)](/news/2013/sep/30/wrongly-convicted-men-lawsuit-clark-county/)

[Exonerated local man urges compensation for wrongful convictions \(/news/2013/apr/05/wrongly-imprisoned-local-man-urges-compensation-fo/\)](/news/2013/apr/05/wrongly-imprisoned-local-man-urges-compensation-fo/)

[Woodland man plans to sue state over wrongful conviction, imprisonment \(/news/2013/aug/01/woodland-man-wrongful-imprisonment-northrop/\)](/news/2013/aug/01/woodland-man-wrongful-imprisonment-northrop/)

[CNN to feature wrongfully imprisoned Ridgefield man \(/news/2012/mar/23/wrongfully-jailed-man-in-cnn-report/\)](/news/2012/mar/23/wrongfully-jailed-man-in-cnn-report/)

[Please take a second to review our community guidelines \(/guidelines/\)](/guidelines/)

[BLOGS \(HTTP://BLOGS.COLUMBIAN.COM\)](http://blogs.columbian.com)

Staff

[All Politics is Local \(http://blogs.columbian.com/all-politics-is-local/\)](http://blogs.columbian.com/all-politics-is-local/)

[Blazer Banter \(http://blogs.columbian.com/blazer-banter/\)](http://blogs.columbian.com/blazer-banter/)

[Brews in Clark \(http://blogs.columbian.com/brews-in-clark/\)](http://blogs.columbian.com/brews-in-clark/)

[Digital Desk \(http://blogs.columbian.com/digital-desk/\)](http://blogs.columbian.com/digital-desk/)

[HealthBeat \(http://blogs.columbian.com/live-well/\)](http://blogs.columbian.com/live-well/)

[High School Sports \(http://blogs.columbian.com/high-school-sports/\)](http://blogs.columbian.com/high-school-sports/)

[Outdoors \(http://blogs.columbian.com/outdoors/\)](http://blogs.columbian.com/outdoors/)

[Political Beat \(http://blogs.columbian.com/political-beat/\)](http://blogs.columbian.com/political-beat/)

[Tailgate Talk \(http://blogs.columbian.com/tailgate-talk/\)](http://blogs.columbian.com/tailgate-talk/)

Community

[Ghost Stories \(http://blogs.columbian.com/ghost-stories/\)](http://blogs.columbian.com/ghost-stories/)

[A Dog's Life \(http://blogs.columbian.com/a-dogs-life/\)](http://blogs.columbian.com/a-dogs-life/)

[From the Cheap Seats \(http://blogs.columbian.com/cheap-seats/\)](http://blogs.columbian.com/cheap-seats/)

[FYI98642 \(http://blogs.columbian.com/fyi98642/\)](http://blogs.columbian.com/fyi98642/)

[Healthy Eats \(http://blogs.columbian.com/healthy-eats/\)](http://blogs.columbian.com/healthy-eats/)

[On the Table \(http://blogs.columbian.com/on-the-table/\)](http://blogs.columbian.com/on-the-table/)

[Paleo in a Pinch \(http://blogs.columbian.com/paleo-in-a-pinch/\)](http://blogs.columbian.com/paleo-in-a-pinch/)

[Portland Timbers \(http://blogs.columbian.com/portland-timbers/\)](http://blogs.columbian.com/portland-timbers/)

[Weather \(http://blogs.columbian.com/weather/\)](http://blogs.columbian.com/weather/)