

Institute for
Constitutional Advocacy and Protection

GEORGETOWN LAW

For Immediate Release

**District Court Allows Disabled Veteran's Lawsuit Challenging
Unconstitutional Arrest and Harassment Campaign to Proceed**

Court finds evidence that Gastonia has “official policy of hostility toward homeless people”

NORTH CAROLINA (July 30, 2025) — A federal court agreed that Joshua Rohrer's complaint challenging his unconstitutional arrest, the tasing of his service dog, and the City of Gastonia's subsequent harassment campaign could be illegal. Joshua Rohrer, a disabled and formerly homeless veteran, was forcibly arrested under an unconstitutional anti-panhandling law, during which officers tased his service dog, Sunshine, who later died. The City followed the unlawful arrest with an extended social media campaign consisting of hundreds of false, taunting, and disparaging statements about Mr. Rohrer.

The District Court agreed with the Magistrate Judge's recommendation that the complaint be allowed to proceed. After reviewing body camera footage of the arrest, the Court concluded that the complaint sufficiently alleged that Gastonia police officers Cierra Brooks and Maurice Taylor III used excessive force when they arrested Mr. Rohrer and tased his service dog. The Court denied both officers qualified immunity. The Court further concluded that there was evidence suggesting that the City of Gastonia has “an official policy of hostility toward homeless people.”

The lawsuit was initially filed against the City of Gastonia, the two City police officers who arrested Mr. Rohrer, and the City employees responsible for running the Gastonia Police Department Facebook page. It asserts claims under the First and Fourth Amendments, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Rehabilitation Act, and state law. Mr. Rohrer is represented by the Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection at Georgetown Law (ICAP) and the Guidry Law Firm.

“We are gratified that both the District Judge and the Magistrate Judge agreed that Mr. Rohrer's complaint asserts meritorious claims,” said ICAP senior counsel Shelby Calambokidis. “Mr. Rohrer's life will never be the same, and we look forward to holding the City and its officers accountable for their unlawful and outrageous conduct toward him.”

The district court's decision can be read [here](#).
Read more about the lawsuit [here](#).

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The **Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection (ICAP)** at Georgetown University Law Center uses strategic legal advocacy to defend constitutional rights and values while working to hold our governmental institutions to the highest standards of integrity and accountability. More information about ICAP can be found at <https://www.law.georgetown.edu/icap>.

Guidry Law Firm is a boutique business litigation firm that provides strategic and practical advice to its clients, representing them in and out of court to resolve disputes, recover damages, and defend against claims. More information about Guidry Law Firm can be found at <https://www.guidrylawfirm.com>.

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