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Civil Rights & Police Misconduct

## Romanucci & Blandin Secures Liable Verdict Against City of Chicago in Civil Rights Case on behalf of Michael LaPorta

November 1, 2017

Romanucci & Blandin, LLC announced today that the City of Chicago has been found liable in the civil rights case brought by their client, Michael LaPorta. The jury impaneled before U.S. District Judge Harry Leinenweber issued its verdict, finding Chicago Police Officer Patrick Kelly responsible for shooting LaPorta and the City responsible for failing to investigate its officers and having no early warning system, thus perpetuating this officer's reckless behavior. Kelly was found to be within the top 2-5% of Chicago police officers with the largest number of citizen complaints.

LaPorta has been awarded \$44.7 million in damages that will serve to cover his extensive medical costs. This is the largest verdict ever returned in a police misconduct lawsuit involving the city of Chicago and in the state of Illinois.

The case arose out of life-threatening and permanent injuries that the then 29-year-old suffered on the night of January 12, 2010, in the home of a man who had been his good friend—Chicago Police Officer, Patrick Kelly. That night, LaPorta, Officer Kelly, and a number of other off-duty Chicago police officers went out to two bars on the south side of Chicago. At around 3:50 a.m., the two men went back to Kelly's home where, in those early morning hours, Officer Kelly's service weapon discharged into the back of LaPorta's head. At the time of the shooting, Kelly and LaPorta were the only people in the Officer's house. Kelly called 911 claiming LaPorta attempted suicide. Miraculously, LaPorta survived and has undergone extensive rehabilitation – he has since regained his ability to speak and the use of one arm, but can no longer read or walk, requiring an electric wheelchair and around-the-clock care. He has never wavered in revealing what happened that night: Kelly shot him.

“My client Michael LaPorta's case cannot be viewed in isolation but as the result of a larger institutional problem that has emboldened police officers with extensive histories of misconduct allegations to continue these harmful behaviors without fear of repercussions,” said plaintiff's attorney, Antonio M. Romanucci, principal and partner at Romanucci & Blandin, LLC. “It has been a long battle for the LaPorta family, and our hope is that this case will open people's eyes to the existence and dangerous consequences of the ‘Code of Silence.’ This verdict is one step in the right direction towards creating meaningful and permanent institutional change in law enforcement – specifically in the City of Chicago.”

Despite having at least 27 investigations into his on-duty and off-duty conduct throughout his career, Kelly had been disciplined only once. A review of complaints shows he had been accused of kicking and punching suspects, making false arrests and threatening to put a false case on someone. He now sits on administrative desk duty.

In addition to Romanucci, Romanucci & Blandin principal and partner, Stephan D. Blandin, and associates Bruno R. Marasso, Debra Thomas, Martin D. Gould, Nicolette A. Ward and law school graduate (who also passed the bar) Bryce Hensley, were also instrumental in representing the LaPorta family.