

Hill. Video of Trial Proceedings, Mar. 2, 2023, available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nbuMq15qY2Q&ab\\_channel=ABCNews4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nbuMq15qY2Q&ab_channel=ABCNews4). Judge Newman responded that “I have not spoken with her today” and that this is “totally independent” of any “conversation” regarding her ex-husband, apparently misunderstanding her question to refer to the issue of the Facebook post. *Id.*

When the jury began deliberations that evening, Ms. Hill told them that “this shouldn’t take us long,” and that if they deliberated past 11 p.m., they would be taken directly to a hotel even though none were prepared to stay overnight. Ex. A ¶ 9. Additionally, smokers on the jury asked to be allowed to take smoke breaks as they had previously been allowed to do during the six-week trial, but Ms. Hill told them they could not smoke until deliberations were complete. *Id.*; Aff. of Holli Miller *re Juror No. 326* ¶ 7, Sep. 1, 2023 (attached as **Exhibit J**). There were six smokers on the jury. Ex. J ¶ 7.

Ms. Hill told jurors that after the trial they would be famous and predicted that the media would request interviews with them. Ms. Hill even handed out reporters’ business cards to jurors during the trial. Ex. B ¶ 5. Juror No. 578 took this to heart and made an appearance on Good Morning America the night of the verdict, which is why on the day the jury began deliberations he wore a suit coat for the first time during the trial. After the verdict and immediately before sentencing, Ms. Hill pressured the jury to speak as a group to reporters for a network news show. Ex. A ¶ 11. She traveled with jurors to New York City when they appeared on the Today show. Ex. D at 93–94. She got her book deal. Her book, “Behind the Doors of Justice,” was released on August 1, 2023.

A last point about Ms. Hill’s efforts to promote her book shows her dishonest efforts to profit from the trial continued well after the verdict. A film crew negotiated a contract with the

Colleton County Sheriff's Department to use courthouse bailiffs to provide security while they filmed a documentary at the Colleton County Courthouse when it was closed for Confederate Memorial Day on May 10, 2023. The film crew had previously recorded an interview with Ms. Hill. On May 9, Ms. Hill sent a memorandum to the film crew purporting to be an "Addendum" to the contract. Mem. from Rebecca Hill, May 9, 2023 (attached as **Exhibit K**). In it, she demanded that the film crew pay Colleton County a fee of \$1,000 per day for use of courthouse facilities and made a nonsensical statement about not having authority outside South Carolina that reflects a failure to understand the choice-of-law clause in the contract. *Id.* Then she bizarrely added a handwritten demand:

Also, in exchange for the use of the likeness of Rebecca Hill in an interview, a minimum of [unclear] 5 second video and audio clips will accompany the usage on the first reference. The book cover for the book, "Behind the Doors of Justice: The Murdaugh Murders["] will be shown and audio will include Becky's introduction as Clerk of Court for Colleton County and author of the book.

*Id.* The film crew ignored her addendum as the contract had already been executed. But like her jury tampering during trial, it was an attempt to violate South Carolina Code § 8-13-700(A), which provides, "No public official, public member, or public employee may knowingly use his official office, membership, or employment to obtain an economic interest for himself . . . ."

## II. Legal Standard

"A defendant in a criminal prosecution is constitutionally guaranteed a fair trial by an impartial jury, and in order to fully safeguard this protection, it is required that the jury render its verdict free from outside influence." *State v. Johnson*, 302 S.C. 243, 250, 395 S.E.2d 167, 170 (1990) (internal quotation marks omitted). "[W]hen the defendant presents a credible allegation of communications or contact between a third party and a juror concerning the matter pending before the jury" the defendant has an "entitlement to an evidentiary hearing." *Barnes v. Joyner*, 751 F.3d 229, 242 (4th Cir. 2014) (citing *Remmer v. United States*, 347 U.S. 227 (1954)); *see also*

*Smith v. Phillips*, 455 U.S. 209, 215 (1982) (“This Court has long held that the remedy for allegations of juror partiality is a hearing in which the defendant has the opportunity to prove actual bias.”).<sup>3</sup>

If the defendant proves the alleged contacts occurred, the prosecution bears the burden to show they were harmless:

In a criminal case, any private communication, contact, or tampering directly or indirectly, with a juror during a trial about the matter pending before the jury is, for obvious reasons, deemed presumptively prejudicial, if not made in pursuance of known rules of the court and the instructions and directions of the court made during the trial, with full knowledge of the parties. The presumption is not conclusive, but the burden rests heavily upon the Government to establish, after notice to and hearing of the defendant, that such contact with the juror was harmless to the defendant.

*Remmer*, 347 U.S. at 229. The presumption is even stronger where the contact was made by a court official. Where “[t]here was the private communication of the court official to members of the jury, an occurrence which cannot be tolerated if the sanctity of the jury system is to be maintained . . . a new trial *must* be granted unless it clearly appears that the *subject matter* of the communication was harmless and could not have affected the verdict.” *State v. Cameron*, 311 S.C. 204, 207–08, 428 S.E.2d 10, 12 (Ct. App. 1993) (quoting *Holmes v. United States*, 284 F.2d 716, 718 (4th Cir. 1960)) (emphasis added).

### III. Argument

A state official, Rebecca Hill, the elected Clerk of Court, had extensive private communications with members of the jury during trial. This allegation is supported by sworn

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<sup>3</sup> The trial court is directed to consider whether (1) the contact was made in an effort to influence the juror by or on behalf of a party in whose favor the verdict was rendered *or*; (2) the contact was such as would obviously influence the juror *or*; (3) the trial judge finds the contact either influenced or probably influenced the juror. *Blake by Adams v. Spartanburg Gen. Hosp.*, 307 S.C. 14, 16–18, 413 S.E.2d 816, 817–18 (1992).

affidavits of jurors and a witness to juror interviews, testimony at *in camera* proceedings, and other evidence including Ms. Hill's own book. The Court, therefore, must hold a *Remmer* evidentiary hearing. *Smith*, 455 U.S. at 215; *Barnes*, 751 F.3d at 242. If the allegations are proven at the evidentiary hearing, then under binding appellate precedent the Court must grant a new trial unless it "clearly appears that the subject matter of the communication was harmless and could not have affected the verdict." *Cameron*, 311 S.C. at 207–08, 428 S.E.2d at 12. The subject matter of Ms. Hill's communications was the evidence being presented at trial by the defense. These improper comments and efforts to influence the jurors' verdict vitiated the sanctity of the jury's deliberation and Murdaugh's sacrosanct right to a fair and impartial jury. Therefore, the Court must grant a new trial if the allegations are proven.

In a six-week trial, people will talk when they should not. They will say things they should not say. Mistakes will be made. The participants in a trial are fallible human beings. Lawyers combing the proceedings after the fact will always find they made mistakes and errors. If that were enough to force a redo of the trial, no verdict would stand, and trials would be repeated forever. To avoid that, Courts properly strain to find that mistakes made during trial are "harmless," meaning they did not change the result.

But the issue now before the Court are not the ordinary and inevitable mistakes that occur in any trial. The issue here is that an elected state official engaged in intentional misconduct—deliberately violating a defendant's constitutional right to a fair trial before an impartial jury—to secure financial gain for herself. Where a state actor engages in private communication with the jury about the merits of the prosecution, the verdict is impossible to sustain. For example, in *Parker v. Gladden*, a bailiff told a juror in a murder trial "that wicked fellow, he is guilty." 385 U.S. 363, 363 (1966). The Supreme Court of Oregon held the statement did not require a new trial

because it was not shown the statement prejudiced the outcome of the trial. The U.S. Supreme Court reversed, holding “[t]he evidence developed against a defendant shall come from the witness stand in a public courtroom where there is full judicial protection of the defendant’s right of confrontation, of cross-examination, and of counsel,” and “[w]e have followed the undeviating rule, that the rights of confrontation and cross-examination are among the fundamental requirements of a constitutionally fair trial.” *Id.* at 364–65 (internal quotation marks and citations omitted).

In this case, the Court has declared on the record that “the verdict that you’ve [the jury] reached is supported by the evidence, circumstantial evidence, direct evidence, all of the evidence pointed to only one conclusion, that’s the conclusion you all [the jury] reach now.” Video of Trial Proceedings at 10:00:32–:51, Mar. 2, 2023, available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nbuMq15qY2Q&ab\\_channel=ABCNews4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nbuMq15qY2Q&ab_channel=ABCNews4). The Court has, therefore, foreshadowed the outcome of any “harmless error” analysis. But the rule for deciding whether to grant a new trial is not whether the Court believes the outcome of the trial would have been the same had Ms. Hill’s jury tampering not occurred. If that were the case, the Court would sustain a guilty verdict even if she coerced the jury to vote guilty at gunpoint, because, in the Court’s opinion, “all of the evidence pointed to only one conclusion”—the guilt of the accused. If the strength of the evidence against the accused in the eyes of the Court excuses deliberate jury tampering by a state actor, the result is a directed verdict for the prosecution, a structural error. That cannot be the law. *Cf. Neder v. United States*, 527 U.S. 1, 34 (1999) (Scalia, J., concurring in part) (noting that even if “the judge certainly reached the ‘right’ result,” “a directed verdict against the defendant . . . would be *per se* reversible *no matter how overwhelming the unfavorable evidence*,” because “[t]he very premise

of structural-error review is that even convictions reflecting the ‘right’ result are reversed for the sake of protecting a basic right.” (emphasis in original)).

Instead, the law requires the “subject matter” of the communication to be harmless—“clearly” harmless. *Cameron*, 311 S.C. at 208, 428 S.E.2d at 12. Asking the jury what it wants for lunch is clearly harmless. Telling it not to believe the defendant when he testifies is not.

Our Supreme Court recently made this point in *State v. Green*, 432 S.C. 97, 851 S.E.2d 440 (2020). In *Green*, during jury deliberations a juror asked a bailiff “what would happen in the event of a deadlock, and he responded the judge would likely give them an *Allen* charge and ask if they could stay later.” *State v. Green*, 427 S.C. 223, 229, 830 S.E.2d 711, 713 (Ct. App. 2019), *aff’d as modified*, 432 S.C. 97, 851 S.E.2d 440 (2020) (citation omitted). The Court of Appeals held the bailiff’s comments were presumptively prejudicial because of his official position, but that the State rebutted that presumption by showing that for various reasons the remark did not in fact influence the outcome of the jury’s deliberations. *Id.* at 236, 830 S.E.2d at 717.

The Supreme Court affirmed but modified the decision to correct the Court of Appeals’ reasoning. The communication was not presumptively prejudicial because the subject matter of the communication was harmless: “The bailiff’s actions here—though improper—did not touch the merits, but dealt only with the procedural question of how the judge might handle a jury impasse that apparently never materialized.” *Green*, 432 S.C. at 100, 851 S.E.2d at 441. In other words, a bailiff telling the jury that if it is deadlocked, the judge will instruct them to keep deliberating is improper but likely harmless because the subject matter is procedural or logistical, rather than to the merits of the case.

Telling the jury not to believe the defendant’s defense or his testimony when he testifies regards the merits of the case. Ms. Hill’s extensive, deliberate, and self-interested jury tampering

far exceeds the simple bailiff mistakes that forced a retrial in *Cameron*, where “a bailiff’s misleading response to a juror’s question about sentencing options compromised the jury’s impartiality because it left the impression that their verdict could not affect the trial court’s sentencing discretion,” or in *Blake by Adams v. Spartanburg General Hospital*, where a bailiff told a juror “that the trial judge ‘did not like a hung jury, and that a hung jury places an extra burden on taxpayers.’” *See State v. Green*, 427 S.C. at 237, 830 S.E.2d at 717–18 (citing 311 S.C. at 208, 428 S.E.2d at 12 and quoting 307 S.C. 14, 16, 413 S.E.2d 816, 817 (1992)). Unlike the honest mistakes of the bailiffs in those cases, Ms. Hill had many private conversations with jurors about the merits of the case. She asked jurors about their opinions about Mr. Murdaugh’s guilt or innocence. She instructed them not to believe evidence presented in Mr. Murdaugh’s defense, including his own testimony. She lied to the judge to remove a juror she believed might not vote guilty, and she pressured jurors to reach a guilty verdict quickly so she could profit from it. Each of these actions violated Ms. Hill’s oath of office, her responsibility to the citizenry and the judiciary of this state, and Mr. Murdaugh’s constitutional right to a fair and impartial jury.

The law applied to these facts requires a new trial.

#### IV. Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, Mr. Murdaugh respectfully submits the Court must hold an evidentiary hearing to receive proof of the facts stated above. When those facts are proven, the Court must grant a new trial.

Respectfully submitted,



Richard A. Harpootlian, SC Bar No. 2725  
Phillip D. Barber, SC Bar No. 103421  
RICHARD A. HARPOOTLIAN, P.A.  
1410 Laurel Street (29201)  
Post Office Box 1090

OCT 27 2023 AM 10:13  
COLLETON CO. GS. REBECCA H. HILL

Columbia, South Carolina 29202  
(803) 252-4848  
rah@harpootlianlaw.com  
pdb@harpootlianlaw.com

James M. Griffin, SC Bar No. 9995  
Margaret N. Fox, SC Bar No. 76228  
GRIFFIN HUMPHRIES LLC  
4408 Forest Drive (29206)  
Post Office Box 999  
Columbia, South Carolina 29202  
(803) 744-0800  
jgriffin@griffinhumphries.com  
mfox@griffinhumphries.com

*Attorneys for Richard Alexander Murdaugh*

October 27, 2023  
Columbia, South Carolina.

COURTESY OF  
LUNA SHARK MEDIA



# **EXHIBIT A**

(Affidavit of Juror No. 630)

COURTESY OF  
LUNA SHARK MEDIA

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA )  
 )  
COUNTY OF COLLETON )

AFFIDAVIT OF [REDACTED]  
JUROR #630

PERSONALLY appeared before me, [REDACTED] who being first duly sworn, deposes and states as follows:

1. I was juror #630 in the case of *State of South Carolina v. Richard Alexander Murdaugh* tried in Colleton County, South Carolina.
2. Toward the end of the trial, after the President's Day break but before Mr. Murdaugh testified, the Clerk of Court, Rebecca Hill, told the jury "not to be fooled" by the evidence presented by Mr. Murdaugh's attorneys, which I understood to mean that Mr. Murdaugh would lie when he testified.
3. She also instructed the jury to "watch him closely" immediately before he testified, including "look at his actions" and "look at his movements," which I understood to mean that he was guilty.
4. Immediately after he testified, the foreperson, [REDACTED] Juror #826, said Mr. Murdaugh was crying on cue.
5. The foreperson, Juror #826, criticized the former foreperson, [REDACTED] Juror #589, for handing Mr. Murdaugh a box of tissues when he was crying on the stand while testifying about his murdered son. She told the jury we cannot interact with Mr. Murdaugh because "that is what the defense wants us to do."
6. The jury frequently discussed the case during breaks before deliberations.
7. Toward the end of the trial, Ms. Hill came into the jury room a lot.
8. Ms. Hill and the foreperson, Juror #826, had private conversations on multiple occasions. The foreperson, Juror #826, would tell the bailiff that she needed to speak

with Ms. Hill. Ms. Hill would arrive, and then she and the foreperson, Juror #826, would go to another room to have a private conversation. The conversations typically lasted 5 to 10 minutes. The foreperson, Juror #826, never said anything about the content of the conversation. For example, she never communicated logistical information after those conversations. This happened two or more times, more frequently toward the end of the trial.

9. When we began deliberations, Ms. Hill told us that "this shouldn't take us long," and that if we deliberated past 11pm, we would be taken directly to a hotel. We had driven from our homes that morning and were not prepared to stay overnight. Additionally, smokers on the jury asked to be allowed to take smoke breaks but were told they could not smoke until deliberations were complete.

10. I had questions about Mr. Murdaugh's guilt but voted guilty because I felt pressured by the other jurors.

11. After the verdict and immediately before sentencing, Ms. Hill pressured the jury to speak as a group to reporters from the television show, ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ *June*

FURTHER AFFIANT SAYETH NOT.

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~  
Juror #630

August 14, 2023

SWORN TO before me this 14 day  
of August, 2023

*Lois Mellin*  
Notary Public for South Carolina  
My Commission Expires: July 25, 2032

# **EXHIBIT B**

(Affidavit of H. Miller *re Juror No. 741*)

COURTESY OF  
LUNA SHARKY MEDIA

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA )  
 )  
COUNTY OF RICHLAND )


AFFIDAVIT OF HOLLI MILLER

PERSONALLY appeared before me, Holli Miller, who being first duly sworn, deposes and states as follows:

1. On August 6, 2023, Dick Harpootlian, Jim Griffin and I met with [REDACTED] Juror #741 in the case of *State of South Carolina v. Richard Alexander Murdaugh* at her home located at [REDACTED]
2. At the meeting on August 6, [REDACTED] indicated she would sign an affidavit. However, we were unable to arrange with her a suitable time and place.
3. During the meeting, [REDACTED] relayed the following information to us.
4. During the trial, she witnessed the Clerk of Court, Becky Hill, come to the jury room and Ms. Hill and the foreperson [REDACTED] #826 went into the bathroom. After Ms. Hill and the foreperson exited the bathroom, Ms. Hill told the jurors they could not ask the foreperson questions.
5. Several times during the trial, Ms. Hill told the jurors that the media would want to interview jurors at the end of the trial and during one of these conversations she passed out business cards from the media to jurors. At the end of the trial, Ms. Hill told [REDACTED] that no one from the media wanted to interview her.
6. Right before the defense put up their case, Ms. Hill told the jurors "Y'all are going to hear things that will throw you all off. Don't let this distract you or mislead you."
7. After Alex testified, eight jurors indicated they did not believe his testimony.
8. [REDACTED] recalled [REDACTED] Juror #544 (known as "Boston" by many of the jurors) was very emotional during the trial.

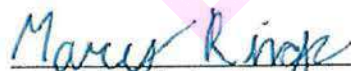
9. During the visit to Moselle, [REDACTED] Juror #826 and [REDACTED] walked to the scene together. Then Juror #826 began walking with the Clerk of Court, Becky Hill.
10. There were times the jurors were not kept together, but were in two separate rooms. [REDACTED] noticed jurors talking about the case before deliberations began. Neither she nor [REDACTED] Juror #785 joined in on the conversations about Alex.
11. As the jury was deliberating, she believes Judge Newman came to the room she was in and told her the jury would have to spend the night at a hotel if they did not have a vote by a certain time, but she does not recall the time deadline.
12. [REDACTED] Juror #741 was the first former juror to provide information that the Clerk of Court made statements to members of the jury about the evidence presented during the trial, prior to jury deliberations. Ms. Hill's conduct was corroborated by other jurors during subsequent interviews.

FURTHER AFFIANT SAYETH NOT.

  
Holli Miller

September 1, 2023

SWORN TO before me this 15<sup>th</sup> day  
of September, 2023

  
Notary Public for South Carolina  
My Commission Expires: 16/2-7/33

# EXHIBIT C

(Draft Transcript of Records Excerpt from *in camera* conference, March 1, 2023)

COURT REPORTERS OF  
LUNA SHARKEY MEDIA

1 to withhold any opinions. And then they say: Can't talk to  
2 you anymore, and walks off. They're off the jury?

3 THE COURT: Okay. Well, let me see what Becky is  
4 talking about. I wanted to revisit the Facebook post that  
5 you mentioned yesterday.

6 MS. HILL: Uh-huh, right.

7 THE COURT: That's Becky Hill, the Clerk of Court. Can  
8 you tell us about that Facebook post?

9 MS. HILL: Yes. I think it was Friday evening just for  
10 a brief moment I perused Facebook, got on Walterboro Word of  
11 Mouth, and saw where someone had said that -- well, it was  
12 the ex-husband of a juror, and he said that he noticed that  
13 his ex-wife was saying that she was on the jury and saying  
14 stuff about how her verdict was going to be, and that he was  
15 the ex-husband but she was known for talking way too much.  
16 And then I just kept on scrolling because that was enough  
17 for me. I've gotten enough.

18 THE COURT: And how did you determine who he was  
19 talking about?

20 MS. HILL: When I heard there was an email on Monday I  
21 figured the two went together, if it was true.

22 THE COURT: Well, she's confirmed she has an ex-husband  
23 who she has three restraining orders out against so --

24 MS. HILL: Right. So then we looked on Monday after  
25 you told me to try to go back and look for it and we