

The Mississippi Jury Verdict Reporter

The Most Current and Complete Summary of Mississippi Jury Verdicts

August 2025

Statewide Jury Verdict Coverage

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Civil Jury Verdicts

Timely coverage of civil jury verdicts in Mississippi including court, division, presiding judge, parties, case number, attorneys and results. Notable results from the southern region, including Memphis and New Orleans, are also covered.

FMLA Retaliation - A laborer at a furniture manufacturing and shipping firm in Ecru, MS alleged a combination of FMLA retaliation and ADA discrimination and retaliation after he was fired when he sought to take time off for mental anxiety related to the untimely death of two of his sons – the company denied it all and explained the decision to terminate was, (1) about the plaintiff's absenteeism, and (2) made before the plaintiff sought FMLA leave

Moore v. Ashley Furniture, 1:23-158

Plaintiff: Louis H. Watson, Robert N. Norris, Jr. and Jane Ashley

Watson, *Watson & Norris*, Flowood

Defense: Steven R. Cupp, *Fisher & Phillips*, Gulfport

Verdict: Defense verdict on liability

Federal: **Aberdeen**

Judge: Glen H. Davidson

Date: 7-30-25

Christopher Moore started working as a laborer in November of 2020 for Ashley Furniture. The company has a manufacturing and distribution center in Ecru, MS (Pontotoc County). Moore suffered an unimaginable loss when his two sons were tragically killed in separate incidents in August of 2020 and July 2021. This as expected created significant anxiety and depression for Moore. He began to treat with a counselor.

The counselor recommended in March of 2022 that Moore take FMLA leave to deal with his emotional symptoms. His counselor sent a letter to Alex Jeter, an HR

official at Ashley Furniture, describing Moore's need for leave.

The day after the letter was sent, Moore came to work early at lunchtime in advance of his shift starting at 5:00 p.m. He had a conversation with Jeter. Moore reported that Jeter told him he could have two weeks off. Moore replied that this was not enough. Jeter, by Moore's recollection, told that if two weeks was not enough, he could resign. Moore was insistent he wanted more time off. Jeter immediately fired him.

This was one version of what had happened. Jeter and Ashley Furniture saw it differently. Jeter explained first that the decision to terminate Moore had already been made before the meeting. Why? He cited Moore's absenteeism. He'd missed some 14 days in the last 365 days, the allowable amount being eight days. Thus when the decision to terminate Moore was made, by Ashley Furniture's telling of the events, Jeter didn't even know about the request for FMLA leave. Moore believed this excuse was a pretext to mask FMLA retaliation, ADA discrimination and ADA retaliation.

Those allegations formed the basis of this lawsuit. Moore advanced those three counts to trial. If he prevailed on FMLA retaliation, he could take "actual damages." If prevailing on the ADA counts, he could take both actual damages and additional sums for "mental anxiety and stress" associated with the discrimination and retaliation.

This case was tried for three days in

Assault/Battery - The plaintiff, an honors graduate from USM who had just moved back to small-town Waynesboro, was eager to reconnect with his community and make friends – he went to a local bar and met what were ostensibly friends who invited everyone at the bar back for a post-party – the plaintiff was then brutally attacked at the party under the pretense of friendship because the attackers suspected he was gay – the attackers pled guilty to assault charges, received a prison sentence of 18 months in custody and the plaintiff then pursued this civil assault and battery claim to a jury trial

Gray v. McCaa et al, 20-54

Plaintiff: John A. Piazza, Laurel

Defense: Daniel M. Waide, *Johnson Ratliff & Waide*, Hattiesburg

Verdict: \$50,000 for plaintiff

Court: **Wayne**

Judge: Charles Wright

Date: 8-5-25

Trevor Gray grew up in Waynesboro but he was always a little different. He was well-liked, well-dressed, friendly and a very good student. Gray was by no means a “good ole boy” within its parlance in rural Mississippi. He didn’t talk or dress like a good ole boy. This conundrum is perhaps hard to define, but as Justice Potter Stewart would say, “I know it when I see it.”

Gray had gone off to the University of Southern Mississippi and graduated as an honors student. Gray, then age 27, worked out of state for a time after graduation before returning to Waynesboro in the April of 2019. He was eager to reconnect with his community and make new friends.

Gray went to a local bar on the



Landon McCaa (left) and Tomas Sion Brown Wayne County Sheriff's Dept.

The mugshots of the defendants in Gray v. McCaa case



An image from the video posted at twitter as McCaa attacks Gray

A Historic Mississippi Verdict

Jim Crow Act Violation

Morris v. Alabama & Vicksburg Railroad

\$15,000 for plaintiff

Warren Circuit Court

February 11, 1911

This case nearly became famous in the law and many thought it would. It began in Vicksburg in 1910. The plaintiff, Pearl Morris, the head milliner at Vicksburg's Valley Dry Goods (the largest department store between Memphis and New Orleans), regularly made shopping trips to New York. She was described as having a sweet disposition, a good nature, possessing excellent taste and being unassuming. The mode of travel at the time was by train.

Morris boarded a train operated by the Alabama and Vicksburg Railroad. She would travel through several states on her way to New York. The problem was that this train only had one Pullman car. There were three black preachers from Washington D.C. who were assigned to the car. Morris would have to share the Pullman (it was a sleeper car) with black patrons.

Mississippi's Jim Crow laws at the time prohibited black and white patrons from riding on the same train car among other things. The railroad didn't budge though. It was intrastate and that was the only car. Morris made the trip to New York and was so taken with vapors, that

she fell ill upon her arrival in the big city.

Thereafter Morris filed a lawsuit in Warren County against the railroad and alleged she was damaged by its violation of the state's Jim Crow laws. The matter was tried in Vicksburg for four days in February of 1911. Morris was represented by Pat Henry, *Henry & Canizaro* of Vicksburg. The railroad's lawyer was R.H. Thompson of *Hirsch Landau*, Vicksburg.

The verdict was received on a Saturday by H.C. Mounses. Morris prevailed and took damages of \$15,000. This was a very significant sum and in modern terms would be close \$500,000.

The verdict was widely reported in region. Why? The issue of the application of Jim Crow laws to

interstate travel was an open one.

There was no question at the time that Mississippi could separate races within its borders, but it was a more troublesome question for trains traveling interstate. The appeal was widely watched.

The Mississippi Supreme Court issued its opinion on December 8, 1912. It was written by Justice Cook. The court noted that Jim Crow laws were an invasion of the national authority of the federal government to regulate commerce. However the court further concluded the laws were not such a burden. Why? Cook explained that "intermingling" was distasteful to both races and could even lead to a riot. The burden was then on the railroad to provide a separate train car to allow the separation of the races.



Valley Dry Goods department store in Vicksburg where Ms. Pearl Morris worked

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