

The South Carolina Jury Verdict Reporter

The Most Current and Complete Summary of South Carolina Jury Verdicts

November 2026

Statewide Jury Verdict Coverage

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In This Issue

Civil Jury Verdicts

Timely coverage of civil jury verdicts in South Carolina including court, presiding judge, parties, attorneys and results.

Truck Negligence - The plaintiff driver suffered injuries (disc, shoulder and headaches) in a crash with a rookie trucker who turned left in front of her – her passenger took a \$30,000,000 verdict against the trucker this May and then in this second trial four months later (they were bifurcated), the plaintiff took \$3,000,000 less 40% comparative fault – the trucking firm has since challenged the verdicts as fundamentally inconsistent and has moved for JNOV relief – its JNOV motions from the first \$30,000,000 case are also remaining pending

Dixon v. New Prime, Inc.,
2024-CP-13-00473

Plaintiff: Liam D. Duffy, *Yarborough Applegate*, Charleston and Douglas Jennings, Jr. and J. Michael Baxley, *Douglas Jennings Law Firm*, Bennettsville

Defense: Brittany T. Bihun, Peter G. Siachos, Alan R. Belcher, Jr. and Kirkley G. White, *Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani*, Charleston for New Prime

John A. “Jay” Jones and Liam P. O'Brien, *Gallivan White & Boyd*, Charleston for Hamilton (Truck Driver)

Verdict: \$3,000,000 for plaintiff less



The plaintiff's vehicle after the collision

40% comparative fault

Court: **Chesterfield**

Judge: Paul M. Burch

Date: 9-24-26

Richard Thomas, then age 41 and a heavy equipment operator, was a passenger on the evening of 3-1-24 with his girlfriend (now wife), Cynthia Dixon. Dixon, age 42, was driving a 2021 Nissan sedan. She is the director of the Humane Society in Marlboro County.

Dixon proceeded in Cheraw (Chesterfield County) on SC 9. SC 9 is the superior road and Dixon had a green light. At the same time, Gregory Hamilton was operating a tractor-trailer for New Prime, Inc. The Springfield, MO based firm is a national leader in refrigerated trucking.

Hamilton was a rookie trucker and had been on the job for just 75 days. He was just a trainee, and his trainer

Historic South Carolina Verdicts

A look back at older South Carolina jury verdicts (sometimes more than 100 years old) both historical and occasionally historic.

Wrongful Death - A teenage died of smoke inhalation at a state park cabin when a fan he had brought caused an electrical fire – his estate alleged negligence as the cabin did not have smoke detector

Knoke v. South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, 1992-CP-13-00154

Plaintiff: Douglas F. Patrick and Stephen R. H. Lewis, *Covington Patrick Hagins & Lewis*, Greenville
Defense: F. Matlock Elliott and Julie K. Hackworth, *Haynsworth Marion McKay & Guerard*, Greenville
Verdict: \$3,000,000 for plaintiff
Court: **Chesterfield**
Judge: Paul M. Burch
Date: May 27, 1994

Jeremy Knoke, a 7th grader at Berea Middle School, came to Cheraw State Park with his church group (Berea Baptist) on the evening of July 5, 1991. Knoke was assigned to a cabin with four other boys. Knoke brought a fan from home to stay cool. The fan caused an electrical fire in the middle of the night. The others boys were able to escape although one suffered significant burns. Knoke died of smoke inhalation.

Knoke's estate (representing his parents, Chip and Becky) sued the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism. The estate alleged negligence in that the cabin lacked a smoke detector. The case was tried to a jury in May of 1994 and the estate prevailed. It took

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA	)	
	)	IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
COUNTY OF CHESTERFIELD	)	
Chip Knoke as Personal Representative of the Estate of Jeremy Ryan Knoke,	)	
	)	
Plaintiff,	)	
	)	
vs.	)	VERDICT
	)	
The South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism,	)	
	)	
Defendant.	)	



We find for the Plaintiff \$3,000,000
Three million dollars Actual Damages.



We find for the defendant.

May 27, 1994
Chesterfield, S.C.

Bereia S. Landon
Foreperson

TRUE COPY, ATTEST
Paul M. Burch
Clerk, C.P. & C.S.
Chesterfield, S.C.

The Knoke v. S.C. Dept. of Parks, Recreation and Tourism

\$3,000,000 in damages. After post-trial motions were denied by the presiding Judge Paul Burch (then a relative rookie), the government appealed. The \$3,000,000 verdict in 1994 would be a little than \$7,000,000 in 2026.

The Supreme Court issued its opinion in *Knoke v. South Carolina*, 478 S.E.2d 256 (S.C. 1996) and affirmed the verdict. Justice Moore wrote that the verdict was not so grossly excessive as to shock the conscience.

Thereafter the State of South Carolina paid the estate \$1,000,000 against the judgment and \$1.18

million more in interest. However it refused to pay the remainder. The estate sued the state in Greenville and sought a Writ of Mandamus to force the state to expend the money. The case was venued to Richland County. The Writ of Mandamus action was dismissed as settled in August of 2020 as a bench trial was pending. **See** *Knoke v. State of South Carolina*, 1999-CP-40-00255 upon the change in venue to Richland County.

This case reminds me of William Faulkner's "The past is never dead. It's not even past." While Jeremy's passing was long ago and for most its just an interesting appellate case,

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