



## Official Exoneration Announced

Results  
12.13.2021

On December 2, 2021, Tennessee Governor Bill Lee officially exonerated Adam Braseel, who spent 12 years of a life sentence in prison between 2007 and 2019 for a killing he has always maintained he did not commit. With this announcement, Braseel becomes the first person convicted of murder in Tennessee to receive an exoneration, which is the highest act of clemency under Tennessee law. The exoneration follows a unanimous vote by the Tennessee Board of Parole in June 2020 recommending that Governor Lee exonerate Braseel.

Braseel was represented by Nashville partner Alex Little and associate Zack Lawson in the matter.

“We want to thank Governor Lee, his staff, and the Board of Parole for looking hard at Adam’s case and taking this historic step to clear his name,” Little said. “Adam is a faithful and kind human. He and his family wholly deserve this act of justice, which wouldn’t have happened without the countless people in his corner fighting for more than 15 years to clear his name. We are grateful for each of them.”

“While Adam’s wrongful conviction demonstrates the ways our criminal justice system can get things wrong, it is encouraging that the system finally got it right,” Little continued. “This exoneration is a hopeful sign that justice can prevail even when facing the longest odds.”

You can read the full article from the *Knoxville News Sentinel* [here](#), and more history of Braseel’s case is available below.

### RELATED PROFESSIONALS

Zack Lawson

Alex Little

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## **Tennessee Board of Parole Vote – June 24, 2020**

On June 24, 2020, the Tennessee Board of Parole voted unanimously to recommend Governor Bill Lee exonerate Adam Braseel, who spent a dozen years in prison for a killing he's always maintained he did not commit.

Following a nearly seven-hour hearing led by Nashville partner Alex Little and associate Zack Lawson, the Tennessee Board of Parole voted unanimously to recommend that Governor Bill Lee exonerate Braseel.

"It's overwhelming again for me to sit here and have to hear this again and again and again. I'm happy to say that I know I'm not going to ever worry about it if I'll ever come home completely innocent. Now, my worry is whether y'all simply do the right thing and make this recommendation for me to be exonerated. It's out of my control," Adam Braseel told the Board of Parole.

During the hearing, Alex Little told the Board of Parole, "This particular nightmare is a singular one brought about against Mr. Braseel. He is seeking today for this board and ultimately for the governor to end that nightmare and clear his name." Although the Board found Braseel innocent and recommended that the governor exonerate him, the decision will ultimately be left up to Governor Lee.

You can read the full article from the *Knoxville News Sentinel* at this link.

## **Murder Charges Dropped by State of Tennessee – August 5, 2019**

In a dramatic turn of events in the courtroom today, the State of Tennessee dropped murder charges against Adam Braseel during a hearing on his petition for a new trial. At the Grundy County Courthouse in Altamont, Tenn., Judge Justin Angel granted a Writ of Error Coram Nobis, finding that Braseel deserved a new trial for the murder of Malcolm Burrows, for which he was serving a life sentence. In a deal with prosecutors, Braseel accepted a plea to the least serious charge in the indictment, aggravated assault of another individual, as part of a "best interest" plea that allowed for his immediate release. Adam Braseel is a free man today.

Braseel has been represented by Burr & Forman partner Alex Little and associate Zachary Lawson. "This is an incredible and important day for Adam and his family. We can never forget, however, that there is another family grieving. But justice does not mean that an innocent man should spend 12 years in jail. In this country, our system of justice is imperfect. Adam has always maintained his innocence, and the facts bear that out. Today's result was a small step in the right direction. I have been honored to represent Adam and look forward to his contributions to our community," stated Little at the conclusion of today's events.

Over the course of the proceedings, Braseel's defense team presented extensive new evidence and testimony identifying another individual's fingerprints at the crime scene and expert testimony about the unreliability of identification procedures. This evidence suggested that another individual, whose prints were found by the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation to be at the crime scene, had committed the murder.

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## **Case History**

In 2007, Adam Braseel was convicted for the murder of Malcolm Burrows and has spent 12 years in jail – even though no physical evidence placed him at the scene of the crime – due to a case of mistaken identity.

Braseel's conviction had been overturned once and a new trial was ordered by Circuit Judge Justin Angel on December 25, 2015. However, the state Court of Criminal Appeals overruled that decision 10 months later and sent Braseel back to prison.

In 2018, new fingerprint evidence and other exculpatory evidence came to light, which would have played a pivotal role in the jury's verdict had it been presented at the original trial. In March 2019, the Grundy sheriff issued a statement stating his belief that Braseel deserves a new trial due to the new physical evidence and the "absolute travesty" of how the initial investigation was carried out.

At a hearing on Wednesday, June 26, a witness testified that Kermit Eugene Bryson confessed to the murder, and the responding officer testified that records regarding the investigation that were used to convict Braseel were inaccurate. The hearing resumed today, August 2 with new testimony, which resulted in the murder charges being dropped.

## **Additional Coverage**

"Out of Prison, Adam Braseel is a Free Man on a Mission," Chattanooga Times Free Press