



## Burr & Forman Represents Victim in 1975 Rape Case to Secure Conviction 48 Years Later

Firm News  
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Burr & Forman, LLP successfully represented the victim of a 1975 cold case to secure the conviction of a man for third-degree rape after 48 years.

In 1975, Carmelita Butcher Wilkes was raped and impregnated in Hopkins County, Kentucky. While she reported the crime and that Melvin Nicholson was the identity of her assailant, Nicholson was arrested in June 1976 only to be released and have his case dismissed in circuit court with the ability to reinstate charges in the future. Wilkes gave birth to a son who was immediately removed from her custody and ultimately adopted.

In 2017, Wilkes was contacted by her son, Christopher Savage, and the two reunited. Wilkes and Savage sought representation in the matter from Burr & Forman, which contacted the Hopkins County Commonwealth's Attorney's Office in May 2021, to reinvestigate the matter. After obtaining DNA from Wilkes and Savage, the firm secured a warrant for Nicholson's blood that led to his indictment in June 2022.

On March 27, 2023, the 78-year old Nicholson pled guilty to third-degree rape and was sentenced to three years of supervised probation and 20 years on the sex offender registry.

"After 48 years of carrying such a heavy burden, we are so happy for Carmelita to gain some sense of justice and freedom from this traumatic experience, as well as a supportive son in Christopher who was instrumental along her side in securing this outcome," said Alex Little, who led the Burr & Forman team in this matter. "We would like to thank the Hopkins County Commonwealth's Attorney's

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Alex Little

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Office for their cooperation and steadfastness in revisiting this cold case in the name of justice for Carmelita and Christopher.”

Burr & Forman Partner Alex Little represented Wilkes.