
Hughes Hubbard & Reed

Pro Bono Client Wins Acquittal at Trial in Assault Case

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March 29, 2017 — Hughes Hubbard partner Will Coronato won an acquittal of charges against a pro bono client that he violated a restraining order and committed assault.

On March 2, a New Jersey Superior Court judge found the client not guilty of all charges and dismissed the complaint, stating that the accuser's version of the events did not add up.

Prior to trial, the prosecutor offered the client a plea deal that would have allowed him to avoid jail time, but he rejected the plea offer. If convicted, the client faced a sentence of up to six months in jail.

The bench trial took place over the course of four afternoons. Because there is no right to trial by jury in New Jersey unless the potential jail sentence exceeds six months, the prosecutor needed to convince only a single judge beyond a reasonable doubt, not a unanimous jury of 12.

While the client acknowledged being at the location where the assault allegedly took place, he denied that the accuser was present and that an assault occurred.

In his ruling, the judge held that the state failed to meet its burden of proof beyond a reasonable doubt. He cited a number of critical admissions Coronato obtained on cross examination of the accuser and repeated many of his arguments from closing.

In addition to Coronato, Matt Reynolds assisted on some early investigation work.