



Teacher who urinated in back yard cleared of indecent exposure charge

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HASTINGS, MI – A Hastings elementary teacher was acquitted Monday, Oct. 13, of an indecent exposure charge after jurors believed his testimony that he was only urinating in his backyard – not exposing himself to a neighbor.

Stephen Anthony Merring, 55, a physical-education teacher at Southeastern Elementary School, has been on paid leave since his April 29 arrest.

He was accused of exposing himself to a neighbor who was in her backyard in the 800-block of East Mill Street in Hastings.

Attorney Fil Iorio said his client is “extremely relieved” to be cleared. The charge is a misdemeanor, but it could have cost Merring his teaching certificate.

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The news of his arrest spread quickly on social media.

“It is extremely disruptive to your life,” Iorio said. “Just being charged is very disruptive.”

He said his client was working in his basement, which doesn’t have a bathroom, when he stepped outside to relieve himself. Merring testified that he didn’t think anyone could see him. His backyard has a lot of vegetation, including shrubs and trees, Iorio said.

Iorio said he was confident that “common sense would prevail.” Still, Merring had a lot riding on the verdict.



A Hastings teacher arrested for indecent exposure was acquitted Monday, Oct. 13, by a Barry County District Court jury.

File photo

"It impacted his career and his livelihood," he said. "We obviously appreciate the work of the jury. We think they reached the correct conclusion. There was a great amount of relief."

The trial last only a few hours. The neighbor testified she saw Merring expose himself.

Iorio argued: "Peeing in your back yard is not a crime. This was not an exposure case. He's got a fairly large back yard. He peed outside, unaware his neighbor was outside."

Iorio said his client wants to return to work. He has been there nearly 20 years and has a "stellar record," his attorney said.

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