

case against Ohio prison officers

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A jury in a federal civil rights case awarded \$404,000 to Tommy Meadows after state prison staff took him to the floor, pepper sprayed him while handcuffed in a strip cell and put him in solitary confinement for two years.

Early in the case, the state offered to settle it for \$5,000, according to court filings.

"Inmates rarely have counsel in these sorts of cases. These cases rarely go to trial. And inmates almost never win," said Meadows' attorney Emmett Robinson. "We were told that this was one of the most significant civil-rights jury cases in the Southern District of Ohio in many years."

The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction declined to comment.

At the [Southern Ohio Correctional Facility](#) in Lucasville, Meadows, who is from Cincinnati, was in line for chow when a fight broke out May 19, 2019. Corrections Officer Christopher Coppick handcuffed Meadows and tried to escort him back to the housing area.

Coppick twisted Meadows' fingers, starting a struggle that resulted in Meadows' head getting bashed against the wall, him being taken to the ground and officers piling on, said Robinson. Officers took Meadows in handcuffs and leg shackles to a small cage where Lt. William Bauer twice sprayed him with pepper spray.

The state argued that Meadows disobeyed officers' orders, resisted being escorted and spat blood at Bauer.

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report on Meadows.

Plowman said he overheard Meadows and another prisoner threatening to kill a corrections officer. Robinson said his client then spent two years in solitary confinement.

The state argued that there was no connection between Plowman's report and the incident at the chow hall.

Meadows' attorney Peter Pattakos dismisses that argument, saying that the case demonstrates a culture in which officers act with impunity.

"It's absurd," said Pattakos. "This was just an airtight case as far as these things go."

The state is facing a lawsuit over [the treatment of James Harris, Jr.](#), a man with serious mental illness who was held in cells without running water for nearly two months at the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility in Lucasville.

The state paid \$17.5 million to settle a lawsuit filed on behalf of [Seth Fletcher, who suffered a spinal cord injury](#) when state prison guards tackled, handcuffed and dropped him at Chillicothe Correctional Institution.

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