

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Sentence commuted in case of man who Minnesota Conviction Review Unit determined is innocent**

*Brian Pippitt has spent over 26 years in prison for murder*

(Saint Paul, MN) – Today, Centurion Ministries d/b/a Centurion and the Great North Innocence Project (GNIP) announced that the Minnesota Pardon Board voted to commute the sentence of their client, Brian Pippitt, clearing the way for his release from prison.

In his testimony to the Board about what he would do if his sentence was commuted, Mr. Pippitt said, “I intend to take care of my father and take care of my family. I have had to hear about the problems with no way of helping them, and I have felt helpless. I intend to live the rest of my time on Earth in peace.”

Mr. Pippitt was convicted in 2001 for the 1998 murder of Ms. Evelyn Malin in Aitkin County, Minnesota. There is no forensic or physical evidence connecting him to the crime, and his conviction rested solely on the perjured testimony of two witnesses, including a jailhouse informant with a documented history of criminal activity and psychosis who received incentives to testify against Mr. Pippitt. Both witnesses have since recanted under oath.

Centurion and GNIP expect Mr. Pippitt to be released from prison by the new year after proceeding through the Department of Corrections supervised release process.

Jim Cousins, Mr. Pippitt’s attorney at Centurion who has been investigating Brian’s innocence claim for over a decade said, “Through our investigation, which included witness interviews, document reviews and expert forensic analysis, we determined that Brian Pippitt is completely innocent of the murder of Evelyn Malin. He was not involved in that crime whatsoever. While I’m not overjoyed that Mr. Pippitt will be subject to a supervised release program, I don’t think that’s necessary, the decision is more sweet than bitter. His sentence was commuted and that’s what we sought.”

The decision by the Pardon Board follows an affirmative vote by the Minnesota Clemency Review Commission in April 2025 recommending that Mr. Pippitt’s sentence be commuted. In recommending clemency, the Commission emphasized the compelling proof of Mr. Pippitt’s factual innocence.

Centurion and GNIP are committed to pursuing a full exoneration for Mr. Pippitt in court. In June 2024, the organizations filed a petition for post-conviction relief on behalf of Mr. Pippitt on the grounds of his actual innocence. With the clemency process behind him, Mr. Pippitt will continue the fight to clear his name while he navigates his new life of freedom.

GNIP Legal Director and attorney for Mr. Pippitt Jim Mayer said, “We are grateful to the Pardon Board for recognizing that there is no good reason to keep this innocent man locked up. Now is the time for us to redouble our efforts to erase this wrongful conviction and remove the shadow it has cast over Mr. Pippitt’s life.”

In May 2024, the Minnesota Conviction Review Unit, an office of the Minnesota Attorney General’s Office, completed a two-year investigation into Mr. Pippitt’s conviction. After reviewing thousands of pages of materials and interviewing more than 25 fact and expert witnesses, the CRU concluded that Mr. Pippitt was not at the scene of the murder, nor was he involved in the crime. The CRU recommended Mr. Pippitt be granted post-conviction

relief based on his actual innocence. This was the first time the CRU has recommended a full exoneration of an incarcerated person.

Attorney General Keith Ellison said in a statement, "Our goal is to ensure that no innocent person is serving time in a Minnesota prison for a crime they did not commit. No person or community is safer, and justice is not served when an innocent person is convicted and imprisoned."

#### **About Centurion**

Centurion Ministries d/b/a Centurion is a national, secular non-profit, established in 1983, with a mission to vindicate for the wrongly convicted. Centurion investigates claims of innocence without any requirement that a particular type of evidence exists in a case. The majority Centurion's cases are rape and/or murder and do not have a scientific element that would be probative of innocence. Centurion utilizes their investigative expertise and over 40 years of post-conviction legal experience to exonerate the innocent in prison and provide the necessary post-release support to assist clients in their journey in freedom. Learn more about Centurion at [Centurion.org](http://Centurion.org)

#### **About the Great North Innocence Project**

The mission of the Great North Innocence Project is to free people convicted of crimes they did not commit and prevent wrongful convictions. The Great North Innocence Project, a founding member of the Innocence Network, has screened and investigated individuals' credible claims of actual innocence and represented wrongfully convicted people for over 24 years. The Great North Innocence Project also educates attorneys and other criminal legal professionals on best practices and works to reform the criminal legal system to prevent innocent people from going to prison. For more, visit [greatnorthinnocenceproject.org](http://greatnorthinnocenceproject.org).

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