

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Man freed after 26 years in prison for murder he maintains he did not commit*Brian Pippitt's legal team continues to pursue a full exoneration on his behalf*

(Faribault, MN) – Today, Centurion Ministries d/b/a Centurion and the Great North Innocence Project (GNIP) announced that their client Brian Pippitt is free. This morning, the Department of Corrections released Mr. Pippitt from custody following the Minnesota Pardon Board vote to grant him a sentence commutation in September.

About his release, Mr. Pippitt said, "After many hurdles, I look forward to being free and I am eager to start the process to clear my name with the help of Centurion and the Great North Innocence Project."

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.

Jim Cousins, Mr. Pippitt's attorney at Centurion who has been investigating Brian's innocence claim for over a decade said, "We celebrate Brian's freedom from his twenty-six years of wrongful imprisonment. We are dedicated to vigorously pursuing every avenue to fully exonerate him and demonstrate his innocence."

The decision by the Pardon Board followed 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, "This day has been a long time coming. Brian has weathered this lengthy ordeal with patience and dignity. We are grateful to the Clemency Commission, Pardon Board, and Supervised Release Board for taking this important step, and to the Minnesota Attorney General's Office for the investigation that confirmed Brian's innocence. All that remains now is to vacate this wrongful conviction."

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

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.

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