

August 12, 2024

Contact:

Audrey Martin
The Legal Aid Society
amartin@legal-aid.org

*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

***City Data: 2024 Payouts on Settlements Alleging NYPD Misconduct Lawsuits
Already Total Over \$82 Million***

***Payouts for the First Seven Months of 2024 Already Surpass Total Settlement
Payouts for Calendar Years 2018, 2019 and 2020***

At this Rate, 2024 Payouts Could Total Over \$140 Million, the Highest in Years

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society [released](#) an [analysis](#) of [data](#) which reveals that from January 1, 2024, to July 30, 2024, the City has already paid out a whopping \$82,168,417 in settlements on lawsuits alleging police misconduct. Payouts for the first seven months of 2024 already surpass the total payouts for calendar years 2018, 2019 and 2020. At this rate, 2024 payouts could total over \$140 million, the highest in years.

Total payouts for police misconduct are likely to be substantially higher because these data do not account for matters that were settled with the New York City Comptroller’s office prior to formal litigation.

Disposal Year	Number of Lawsuits disposed	Total payout	Mean payout	Median payout
2018	1,579	\$76,492,742	\$48,444	\$10,500
2019	1,283	\$71,918,243	\$56,055	\$17,500
2020	932	\$62,111,492	\$66,643	\$20,000
2021	755	\$87,556,727	\$115,969	\$20,000
2022	971	\$135,381,214	\$139,425	\$22,500
2023	814	\$115,639,983	\$142,064	\$25,000
1/1/2024 - 7/30/2024	416	\$82,168,417	\$197,520	\$25,000

In 2023, [the City paid out \\$115,639,983 million in lawsuits](#) alleging police misconduct. Since 2018, these lawsuits have cost taxpayers a staggering \$631,268,818.

“The NYPD has already cost taxpayers tens of millions of dollars this year to foot the costs of alleged misconduct, and at this rate, total payouts for 2024 could balloon to over \$140 million, the highest in years,” said **Jennvine Wong, Supervising Attorney with the Cop Accountability Project at The Legal Aid Society**. “The ‘no rules, no consequence’ culture that thrives within the NYPD not only undermines public safety, but diverts precious taxpayer dollars away from critical services that New Yorkers depend upon. Most glaring, we can surmise that based on the NYPD’s refusal to discipline their own, many of the members of service named in these lawsuits are still on the job, earning their full salary, carrying a gun, wearing a badge, and policing our neighborhoods.”

Case examples:

Evan Alejandro et. al. v. City of New York

Incident date: April 26, 2022

Settlement date: January 19, 2024

Payout: \$215,000

Summary: On April 26, 2022, Evan Alejandro and John Santamaria were stopped, searched, and assaulted without warrant, probable cause, nor reasonable suspicion by officers on duty in the Bronx. The officers did not conduct a sufficient or reasonable investigation and failed to follow police procedures.

The assault by the officers resulted in sustained physical injuries to Alejandro and Santamaria’s head, neck, back, body, and limbs. Despite Alejandro and Santamaria protesting and informing the officers that they had committed no crime, they were both arrested and falsely prosecuted for various crimes. Their arrest, assault, false imprisonment, and malicious prosecution deprived them of their liberty until January 20, 2023, when all charges against them were dropped in their favor.

[Juan R. Martinez Cabrera](#) has been named as a defendant in 10 other lawsuits, six of which are still pending. The other four lawsuits resulted in a total of \$242,500 in settlement payouts. Martinez Cabrera has also been the subject of at least 11 civilian complaints filed with the CCRB.

[Joseph N. Canale](#) has been named as a defendant in 10 other lawsuits, seven of which are still pending. The other three lawsuits resulted in a total of \$130,000 in settlement payouts. Canale has also been the subject of at least seven civilian complaints filed with the CCRB.

Norberto Peets v. City of New York et. al.

Incident date: October 6, 1996

Settlement date: March 26, 2024

Payout: \$14,750,000

Summary: On October 6, 1996, Norberto Peets was arrested and falsely identified as having played a role in a recent shooting that occurred in the Bronx. Peets, along with his friend and younger cousin, were stopped and detained by officers on an unfounded accusation that they had just attempted to rob a restaurant.

Officers then called Officer William Fullam to the scene under the false pretense that Peets and his companions matched the description of the suspects in the recent shooting, which Fullam corroborated. Based on the misidentification, officers placed Peets in suggestive lineups, leading Peets to be formally misidentified by Fullam and Officer Claude Staten as the shooter and booked on attempted murder charges related to the shooting incident.

The officers replaced details from the alleged robbery with elements from the shooting and omitted evidence that would have exonerated Peets, who was convicted on all charges and sentenced to thirty years to life.

Decades after he was convicted, DNA analysis found that Peets was not a match for evidence found at the crime scene, and it was determined that the defendants failed to investigate suspects and mishandled biological evidence. Peets's conviction was vacated, and he was released from custody. On May 9, 2023 — more than twenty-six years after being falsely accused — Mr. Peets's indictment was vacated.

Claude Staten has been named as a defendant in two other known lawsuits, one of which is still pending. An internal investigation found Staten guilty of failing "to notify operations unit of his involvement in an unusual police occurrence." Staten has also been the subject of at least 11 civilian complaints filed with the CCRB.

###

The Legal Aid Society exists for one simple yet powerful reason: to ensure that New Yorkers are not denied their right to equal justice because of poverty. For over 145 years, we have protected, defended, and advocated for those who have struggled in silence for far too long. Every day, in every borough, The Legal Aid Society changes the lives of our clients and helps improve our communities. <https://www.legalaidnyc.org>