

February 18, 2025

Contact:

Audrey Martin
amartin@legal-aid.org
774.266.5233

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

***City Data: NYPD Alleged Misconduct Cost New Yorkers Over \$205 Million in
Lawsuit Settlements in 2024***

***Since 2018, Taxpayers Have Shouldered the Cost of Thousands of Lawsuits
Against the NYPD, With Settlements Totaling Over \$750 Million***

***Analysis Comes as Officials and Law Enforcement Move to Roll Back New York's
Evidence-Sharing Law, Which Helps Protect Against Wrongful Convictions and
Exposes Police Misconduct***

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society released an [analysis](#) of [data](#) showing that the City paid a staggering [\\$205,631,253](#) in police misconduct lawsuit settlements in 2024, marking the highest annual payout in years. Since 2018, taxpayers have shouldered the cost of thousands of alleged misconduct lawsuits, with settlements totaling over \$750 million.

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

This analysis comes amid [attempts](#) by Governor Kathy Hochul, Mayor Eric Adams, the New York City Police Department, and prosecutors to roll back New York's widely successful and modernized evidence-sharing practices, known as discovery, which have helped prevent wrongful convictions and unjust incarceration while exposing police misconduct and furthering accountability.

If Governor Hochul's proposal is enacted, New Yorkers accused of a crime would once again [be denied access to critical case documents](#), forcing them to navigate an already daunting legal process [blindfolded](#). Moreover, it

would enable the police to conceal evidence from both prosecutors and defense attorneys by limiting prosecutors' disclosure obligations to materials in their actual possession.

In other words, if the police choose not to share something from their files with the prosecutor in a case, the prosecutor will have no incentive to obtain it. Many of the settled cases, which contributed to the City's astronomical 2024 payout, demonstrate that prosecutors' failure to obtain all evidence and information possessed by the police results in wrongful convictions and unjust and prolonged incarceration.

When defense attorneys have access to the police reports and other relevant information, it is more likely they will find issues of concern that previously went unnoticed or were intentionally withheld. Any reduction in the requirement that timely and complete discovery is turned over on every case will result in serious injustice.

Calendar Year	Total Lawsuits Disposed	Total Calendar Year Payout
2024	953	\$205,631,253
2023	824	\$116,257,780
2022	974	\$135,349,617
2021	762	\$88,203,727
2020	932	\$62,111,492
2019	1,280	\$71,898,243
2018	1,577	\$76,492,742
TOTAL	7,302	\$755,944,854

“The staggering payout totals for 2024 prove that the City would rather spend tens of millions in taxpayer dollars each year than take decisive action to dismantle the culture of impunity within the NYPD that allows this gross misconduct to persist,” said **Amanda Jack, Policy Director with Criminal Law Reform at The Legal Aid Society**. “Our analysis, based on City data, comes amid attempts by elected officials and law enforcement to completely gut New York’s widely successful discovery reform, which helps guard against wrongful convictions and prolonged detention while exposing police misconduct. If they succeed, injustices will surge, and taxpayers will ultimately bear the financial cost.”

Case Examples

Case name: [*Norberto Peets v. City of New York et. al.*](#)

Incident date: 10/6/1996

Settlement date: 3/26/2024

Payout: \$14,750,000

Summary According to Court Documents: Norberto Peets spent almost 26 years incarcerated for a crime he did not commit because NYPD officers allegedly fabricated a story about his involvement in a shooting, affirmatively withheld information about an alternative suspect, and destroyed key biological evidence that could have exonerated him. At the scene of the crime, one of the victims positively identified another person on site as the shooter, but the identified shooter was let go without further questioning, and this information was never disclosed to defense.

Officer Tegano marked a bloody bullet fragment for testing, but the NYPD never sent it to the laboratory, and then the NYPD bleached the blood from the bullet fragment before losing both it and the envelope in which it was stored.

Mr. Peets's conviction was vacated on September 30, 2022, after DNA testing on a baseball cap believed to belong to the shooter eliminated him as a wearer of the hat. Officers Claude Staten and William Fullam, who also claimed to remember seeing Mr. Peets at the scene of the crime, allegedly never disclosed that they knew Mr. Peets from their handling of a separate incident – an alternative explanation for their misidentification of him as the perpetrator.

Had the withheld evidence been shared with prosecutors and the defense in this case, Mr. Peets might not have been wrongfully convicted and imprisoned for 26 years. The Governor's proposal to rollback our discovery law will do away with the current law's protections against this sort of injustice by weakening the requirement that the police share *all* evidence and information with prosecutors – and letting prosecutors off the hook if they don't obtain it.

Case name: [James Davis v. City of New York et. al.](#)

Arrest date: 3/26/2004

Settlement date: 8/23/2024

Payout: \$8,500,000

Summary According to Court Documents: James Davis spent over 17 years incarcerated for a shooting after multiple NYPD officers not only failed to investigate an eyewitness account but also willfully withheld it from his defense team. Detectives Matthew Hutchison and Edward Vasquez showed witnesses a deliberately misleading photo of Davis from two years earlier, featuring a different hairstyle, to better match prior descriptions of the perpetrator.

During their investigation, an eyewitness who had been stabbed awoke from his surgeries and told the detectives another person had committed the shooting to defend him from the stabbing. Detective Hutchison failed to pursue this information, and either did not document this statement or withheld or destroyed any documentation of this statement, and he never turned over this information to Mr. Davis's defense team.

On April 21, 2021, Mr. Davis's conviction was vacated. Had the exculpatory information withheld by the police been shared with the prosecutors and the defense, Mr. Davis may not have been tried, much less convicted. Furthermore, had the current discovery laws been in place at the time, the police would not have been able to

hide the witness' statement nor would the prosecutor have been in a position to go to trial without speaking to this eyewitness and obtaining the information for herself.

###

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 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. www.legalaidnyc.org