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\$176,000 Awarded to Teacher's Aide Falsely Arrested at Work

In the Philadelphia County Court of Common Pleas, on August 31, 2012, a jury found the defendant, Police Detective Linda Blowes, liable for malicious prosecution and awarded plaintiff Joyce Combs \$151,000 – punitive damages of \$1,000 and compensatory damages of \$150,000 – and \$25,000 in attorney fees. On February 25, 2009, the plaintiff was arrested at work to the sounds of students excitedly yelling, “They got Ms. Combs! They got Ms. Combs!,” for allegedly taking her daughter’s two children without permission and charged with interfering with the custody of a minor, concealment of minors, and conspiracy. Charges were dropped after plaintiff’s daughter sent a letter to the district attorney’s office with the admission that she fabricated both the story and the children.

Even though the children did not actually exist, Linda Blowes claimed that she conducted a proper investigation without malice.

Plaintiff Combs testified that she was suspended from her job, at which she worked 33 years, following the arrest. She described the emotional distress of being an innocent in jail and the later devastation of separation from her special needs students because her “children were my life.” She wasn’t reinstated after almost six months.

The jury found detective Blowes’ conduct constituted actual fraud or willing misconduct and awarded damages. See: *Joyce Combs v. Linda Blowes*, Phil. Co. Ct. of Common Pleas (31 Aug. 2012), Case no. 110401523.

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Joyce Combs v. Linda Blowes

Year	2012
Cite	Phil. Co. Ct. of Common Pleas (31 Aug. 2012), Case no. 110401523
Level	State
Conclusion	Jury Verdict
Attorney Fees	25,000
Damages	151,000
