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Office of the District Attorney
Monroe County, Wisconsin

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For Immediate Release
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Readstown Nurse Sentenced to Prison for Engaging in Sexual Intercourse with Patient

[SPARTA, WI] Today, Monroe County District Attorney Kevin D. Croninger announced that on February 27, 2026, Honorable Judge Paul Curran found Melissa R. Knutson, of Readstown, Wisconsin guilty of Misconduct in Public Office and Obstructing an officer. These convictions were based upon Knutson's pleas to these charges. Judge Curran then sentenced Knutson to 18 months of initial confinement in prison and an additional 2 years of extended supervision for the Misconduct in Public Office conviction. Knutson was also sentenced to 180 days of jail on the Obstructing an Officer conviction, this sentence will run concurrently to her prison sentence. Judge Curran ordered Knutson be taken into custody immediately following the completion of the February 27, 2026 hearing.

The charges stem from Knutson's time as a nurse for Monroe County. During that time, while serving as a nurse for a drug court participant, Knutson repeatedly engaged in sexual intercourse with that patient/participant. When the facts of her intercourse with a patient/participant were reported to the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services, Knutson responded by falsely accusing the patient of sexual assault. Both via letter and by entering her plea, Knutson acknowledged that she was not sexually assaulted, and instead fabricated that allegation to avoid consequences for her sex acts with the patient/participant.

District Attorney Kevin Croninger praised the sentence from Judge Curran, "The harm caused by Ms. Knutson was deep and significant. Not only did she violate the sacred trust between a patient and a nurse, but she compounded that by falsely accusing the patient of sexual assault. This situation is particularly egregious given the patient in this situation was a participant in drug court. Judge Curran was extremely concerned about the significant level of harm caused by Ms. Knutson and his sentence reflected that significant level of harm. We are thankful for Judge Curran's perspective, understanding, and the sentence he handed down."

The Honorable Judge Paul Curran, who serves as a Juneau County Circuit Court Judge, did not mince words when describing the serious nature of Ms. Knutson's behavior. During sentencing Curran indicated that Knutson's behavior was "despicable" and that she was "an embarrassment to nurses everywhere." Curran further indicated that it appeared Knutson, felt she was more important than everyone else and that her purported remorse was "a mile wide and an inch deep."

The prosecution of the case was handled by Monroe County District Attorney Kevin Croninger with support and assistance by the staff of the Monroe County District Attorney's Office.

The investigation of the case was led by Lieutenant Jose Tovar of the City of Sparta Police Department, with assistance from Deputy Chief Booker Ferguson and Officer Adam Malin, of the City of Sparta Police Department, Monroe County District Attorney's Office Investigator Andrew Kuen, and Investigator JoEllen Egge of the Vernon County Sheriff's Office.

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Croninger praised the high quality of work from all officers involved, “All officers involved in this matter demonstrated a tremendous commitment to seeking the truth, through evidence. All involved take every sexual assault very seriously. When Ms. Knutson reported she was sexually assaulted that allegation was taken seriously. The officers were highly professional in investigating that allegation and determining that Ms. Knutson was lying. Officers then completed an extremely thorough and effective investigation which uncovered a plethora of evidence, that Ms. Knutson was in fact the perpetrator, not the victim. Without this commitment to seeking the truth through evidence, an unjust result may have occurred. Instead the truth was discovered and justice was served. All officers involved deserve a tremendous amount of credit for their commitment to uncovering the truth.”



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