

Local 

Ex-deputy claims judge is treating him unfairly

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HOUSTON (KTRK) -- A former Harris County sheriff's deputy was convicted of sexually assaulting a child, but in an unusual twist the conviction was tossed. Now the man is speaking out just as a new warrant has been issued for his arrest.

Retired deputy Paul Briones is awaiting a new trial, but he may find himself behind bars long before a new jury hears his case. That's because a judge Monday called him a fugitive after missing court.

Briones was supposed to appear again in court Monday, but did not, he claims, due to medical issues. A warrant has been issued for his arrest. He spoke with us about that and how he feels he's now being presumed guilty instead of innocent.

This is the first time Briones has talked publicly since being granted a new trial on July 20.

"I was relieved, but I was dumbfounded from that point on," Briones told Eyewitness News.

He was found guilty last month on two counts of aggravated assault of a child under age 14. But a new trial was granted after his attorney discovered the jury considered evidence not admitted at trial. Once the conviction was thrown out, a new bond was set but the \$160,000 is double what the judge had set prior to his first trial.

"She didn't give me a reason. My understanding is that she said she didn't have to give a reason," Briones told us.

He came up with the money to bond out. He was supposed to be back in court last Thursday but missed his appearance after numbness in his left arm and leg and high blood pressure led him on an unexpected trip to the emergency room. The judge issued a warrant for his arrest.

"I just don't feel that I'm being treated fairly," Briones said.

In court Monday, visiting Judge Robert Jones said, "He has forfeited bond, is not here today and is appearing to be a fugitive."

Briones says his doctor fears increased stress could lead to him having a stroke. The judge is asking for another doctor to take a look at Briones for another opinion. He denies running from the law.

Judge Joan Campbell never returned our calls about doubling Briones' bond.

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