

NEWS

Leesburg man gets life plus 38 years for 2021 fatal shooting

BY EVAN GOODENOW

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Furqan Syed's request for leniency for killing Najat Chemlali Goode fell on deaf ears in Loudoun Circuit Court on July 13.

Noting Syed surveilled Goode's home for three days before entering it and shooting her three times on Dec. 30, 2021, Chief Judge Douglas L. Fleming Jr. said the killing wasn't a heat-of-passion crime. He sentenced Syed to life plus 38 years for first-degree murder, unlawful armed entry, and use of a firearm in commission of a felony. Calling Syed's actions "deliberate" and "purposeful," Fleming said the killing "can only be described as an assassination."

Syed, 42, of Leesburg, was convicted on April 14, but maintains his innocence. His attorney, John A. Boneta, sought the low end of state sentencing guideline recommendations. They called for a minimum of 25 years and three months, a midpoint of 33 years and eight months, and a maximum of 42 years and one month.

Syed is a member of the Messiah Foundation International, also known as the Mehdi Foundation International, which originated in Pakistan. The MFI website says the group spreads a "unifying message of spiritual love," and it offers free spiritual healing.

It also predicts a giant comet will collide with the earth in 2026 and that deceased Taliban leader Mullah Omar is the anti-Christ who will be resurrected during "End Times." MFI leader Younus AlGohar said on his website that the organization is heralding the second coming of Christ and aiming to unite all of humanity.

The Pakistani government considers the MFI a cult. Boneta said Syed, now a U.S. citizen, fled Pakistan and received asylum in the U.S. due to religious persecution. Boneta said Syed, a husband and father of a 4-year-old boy, has no prior criminal record and has behaved since being jailed about two years ago. He said the killing was tragic for the family of Syed as well as of Chemlali-Goode.

"There is always room for mercy," Boneta told Fleming. "He appreciates the tragedy. No one is saying she wasn't a won-

derful woman."

Fleming was unmoved.

"When one is looking down the barrel of a gun, the lack of a criminal record by the person holding the gun is cold comfort," he said.

Evidence against Syed included him resembling a man seen on video near Chemlali-Goode's Conn Marie Terrace home on Dec. 27, 28 and 29, 2021, his car closely resembling the car seen on video near her home on those days, and data showing Syed's phone was in the neighborhood at the same time that the car and man were there. Additionally, Sheima Abbas, Chemlali-Goode's daughter, identified Syed as the man who knocked on her mother's front door on Dec. 27, 2021 and gave his last name as Syed.

Michele Louise Burton, a Loudoun County deputy commonwealth's attorney, noted Syed purchased a ticket for Dubai in the United Arab Emirates three hours after the county Sheriff's Office released a composite sketch drawn with the help of Sheima Abbas that closely resembled Syed. He was arrested in March 2022 in Dubai and extradited to the U.S.

Burton sought the maximum of two life sentences plus three years for Syed. She said when he killed Chemlali-Goode, he "desecrated" the home she'd worked hard to buy and felt safe in.

"He does not deserve mercy," Burton said. "He has proven through his actions that he is an evil, vicious, and immoral soul."

The sentencing came after tearful testimony from Abbas, 21, and her 24-year-old brother, Alexander Abbas. They described their 57-year-old mother — an accountant who grew up in Casablanca, Morocco, and came to Virginia in the early 1980s — as generous, kind, hardworking and intelligent.

Chemlali-Goode was a single mother who raised her two children while working full time and going to college. She spoke Arabic, English and French.

Abbas, who found his mother shortly after she'd been killed and called 911, said his life has been "absolute hell" since her death. He said he worries about being murdered by MFI members and said he feels "empty and hollow" without his mother who he said was the greatest person he ever met. Abbas said she won't get to meet his wife if he ever marries or see



Times-Mirror/Evan Goodenow

Alexander and Sheima Abbas, children of homicide victim Najat Chemlali-Goode.

her grandchildren if he has kids.

"I wanted to repay my mother for all the suffering she went through," said Abbas, who sought the maximum sentence for Syed. "I never had the chance and I never will."

Sheima Abbas said after going through her teenage years, her relationship with her mother become deeper and their bond stronger.

"I expected to share so much of my life with her. Now it's all been taken away," said Abbas, who also sought the maximum for Syed. "When I walk through the hallway, I can't help writhe at the terror, fear, and confusion my mother felt. I can't bear it."

Chemlali-Goode wasn't an MFI member, but authorities said her sister, Hassania Chemlali, is married to AlGohar, who lives in London. Sheima Abbas previously testified that Syed's brother Irfan Syed is the president of the U.S. chapter of the group and group members keep pictures of AlGohar on the walls of their homes. Court documents include a photo of Fur-

qan Syed and his family in their living room with a photo of AlGohar on the wall.

Abbas said on July 13 that she and her brother always thought MFI members were strange, but their mother urged them be tolerant. She said AlGohar attended her mother's and kissed the casket, but she felt betrayed by the group when she learned that Syed was a member.

Alexander and Sheima Abbas believe their mother's killing may be connected to AlGohar and said in an interview after Syed's sentencing that it's been frustrating that a motive for the killing hasn't been disclosed. The Abbases, who thanked the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office and Sheriff's Office for their work on the case, said the fact that AlGohar lives in London and members often communicate online has made the investigation harder.

"There are a lot of barriers considering the internet and the U.K., and that gray area of jurisdiction," Sheima Abbas said. "They've hit a bit of a wall."

Leesburg police say hoax call alleged downtown shooting

BY EVAN GOODENOW

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A "swatting" call led to a heavy police presence by the Loudoun County Courthouse in Leesburg around 3 p.m. on July 17.

Leesburg Police Department spokesman Officer Michael Drogin said police are investigating who made the bogus call that put police and county Sheriff's Office

deputies in the courthouse at 18 E. Market St., on high alert. The caller said someone had been shot in the first block of East Market Street. Drogin said 911 dispatchers are trained to be on guard for swatting calls.

Swatting involves prank calls about violence such as bombings and shootings, or warnings that people are about to commit violence, according to the FBI. The caller masks their caller ID through spoofing.

The calls, which are often computer generated, happen hundreds of times annually around the U.S. Late last year and earlier this year, there were many fake calls about school shootings around the nation, according to the Associated Press.

The calls sometimes lead to police responding with SWAT teams and can trigger school lockdowns such as an incident in Ashburn in 2015. And they can have deadly consequences. An unarmed man in

Wichita, Kansas, was fatally shot by a police officer responding to a hoax call about a kidnapping and shooting at the man's home, according to the AP. In March, the city of Wichita agreed to pay the man's family \$5 million.

Drogin and Michele Bowman, a Sheriff's Office spokeswoman, said their departments each typically get a handful of fake calls annually. They said they are taken very seriously.

NEWS

Doctor sued again over conduct with teenaged patient

BY EVAN GOODENOW
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Eight months after a jury found him liable for malpractice for allegedly fondling a 15-year-old girl, a Loudoun County pediatrician purportedly fondled another teenaged girl, according to an \$8.7 million malpractice lawsuit filed in Loudoun Circuit Court on May 30.

The lawsuit, written by attorney James P. Wagner, names Dr. Martin Seth Forman and Landsdowne-based Reston Pediatrics Associates as defendants. The plaintiff, a high school senior, is identified as Jane Doe. Wagner said she visited Reston Pediatrics in February for a physical to play sports for her school and Forman examined her alone in an exam room with the door closed.

The latest lawsuit comes after a jury found Forman and Reston Pediatrics liable for \$1.5 million on June 24, 2022. Judge James P. Fisher later reduced the award to \$1.3 million, but dismissed an appeal by the defendants.

Magner said Virginia State Police investigators contacted him a few months ago about Forman. However, VSP spokesman Corinne Geller said in an email that there is no record of For-

man being investigated by her agency. Michele Bowman, a Loudoun County Sheriff's Office spokeswoman, said in an email that Forman is not under investigation by the LCSO.

Magner said Forman performed a lymph node exam, which he said was performed without a legitimate medical reason. During the exam, he placed his hands inside the girl's shirt and touched the sides of her breasts while pretending to check the lymph nodes in her armpits. He's also accused of standing closely behind her while she was bent over after he said he needed to check her spine. While the girl was seated, Magner said Forman straddled her and rubbed his erect penis against her knee while pretending to examine her ears, nose and throat.

"There was no legitimate medical basis for any of Forman's acts during the examination of the plaintiff," Magner wrote. "Forman did not obtain the plaintiff's consent to touch her breasts, to examine her buttocks, or to rub his penis against her."

The girl suffered embarrassment and shame from the alleged sexual battery and is fearful of male doctors, according to Magner. He said Reston Pediatrics knew Forman had a "propensity to engage in inappropriate acts with his young, female patients,"



Times-Mirror/Coy Ferrell

The Loudoun County Courthouse in Leesburg.

but allowed him to continue conducting exams alone with his patients in closed rooms. "Reston Pediatrics condoned and adopted Forman's actions, including his sexual battery of the plaintiff," Magner wrote.

Forman didn't return a request for comment on May 31. The 70-year-old Forman has been in private practice since 1984, according to the Reston Pediatrics website. It said he is the chairman of the Reston Hospital ethics committee and former chairman of the hospital's pediatrics department. He also holds an academic appointment with the University of Virginia and is an Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine INOVA Campus. He also practices at Inova hospitals, according to the Inova website.

"He has specialized in the evaluation of children and adolescents struggling in school," the Reston Pediatrics website said. "Dr. Forman's areas of medical interest are pulmonary, allergy, asthma, dermatology, learning disabilities, sports and dance injuries."

The first lawsuit was filed over incidents on March 28, 2017, and the following day, according to court documents. The first incident occurred after the girl visited Forman's office with her mother due to feeling feverish. The first lawsuit, also written by Magner, said Forman repeatedly touched the girl's knees during the exam and suggested she go see a play

about abortion, coming-of-age, pedophilia and pregnancy.

On the following day, the suit said Forman showed up unannounced at the girl's home and demanded to examine her despite her mother's objections. He allegedly placed his hands through the girl's pajama top and fondled her armpits and breasts, demanded she give him her cell phone number, and invited her to come home with him while referencing CDs and plays he told her about the day before.

"Everyone is scared of him. He asked for her cell phone number and waved me off when I said she couldn't," the mother wrote in an affidavit in 2017 seeking a protective order against Forman in a case that was eventually dismissed in Loudoun Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court. "He asked her to hang with him at his house since I was going to work. He gave her his cell phone number at the doctor's appointment the day before on a paper that he wrote down a play about pedophilia."

Magner said when the mother complained about Forman to Reston Pediatrics, they "fired" the girl and her family as clients "thereby condoning and accepting his actions."

In a May 31 interview, Magner said his clients in the first case complained in 2021 to the Virginia Board of Medicine which oversees doctors, including handling disciplinary procedures. He said they also complained to law enforcement agencies.

"Nobody has taken any action. I was shocked," he said. "Apparently, he's still able to not only practice, but he's allowed to see young, female patients in the exam room alone."

Diane Powers, a spokeswoman for the Virginia Department of Health Professions, said all Board of Medicine information about disciplinary proceedings against medical professionals is confidential. "Under law, it is not possible to confirm nor deny whether there is an investigation of Dr. Forman," Powers wrote in an email.

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ELECTION

Biberaj defends 'smart on crime' approach

BY EVAN GOODENOW

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Buta Biberaj said she plans to focus on prosecuting violent criminals, expanding alternatives to incarceration for low-level, non-violent offenders, and increasing help for crime victims if she's elected to a second term as commonwealth's attorney.

When she first ran for office 2019, critics painted her as "soft on crime" and said her reform efforts would endanger public safety in a largely affluent county where crime rates are traditionally low.

But Biberaj, a Democrat, said in an interview with the Times-Mirror that crime levels remained low after she took office in 2020. Citing Virginia State Police statistics, she noted violent crime decreased 31% between 2019 and 2021 in Loudoun. It increased about 7% statewide in 2021 from 2020, but dropped 12.5% in Loudoun.

In 2022, crime remained relatively low in Loudoun, according to the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' annual crime report. There were small increases in aggravated assaults and robberies and a 24% increase in larcenies compared to 2021, when some businesses were closed or operating limited hours for part of the year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the 2022 crime levels were similar to those in 2019, before the pandemic.

The numbers stayed low despite the daily inmate population at the Loudoun County Adult Detention Center dropping 41%, from 425 to 250 inmates, saving taxpayers about \$40,000 per day and up to \$14.6 million annually. Biberaj credited her office's emphasis on alternatives to incarceration such as the creation in March of a "veterans docket," a pilot program for non-violent ex-military members, for the decline. She said it's part of a pragmatic and proactive approach designed to reduce recidivism and hopes to expand the program, which currently serves a handful of military veterans.

Biberaj said she's also focused on increasing prosecutions of domestic violence and sex crime cases and aiding victims of those crimes. Under her predecessor, Republican James E. Plowman — now a Loudoun Circuit Court judge — Biberaj said there were two attorneys, four victim-witness case managers and two support staffer in the special victims unit. Under Biberaj, the unit now has seven prosecutors, seven victim-witness case managers and four support staffers.

Besides seeking to hold offenders accountable, Biberaj said the expansion was designed to aid victims — even if they choose to not cooperate with prosecutions. After the expanding the unit, the number of victims contacted increased from 1,200 to 1,700 annually. Biberaj vowed to con-



Times-Mirror/Coy Ferrell

Loudoun County Commonwealth's Attorney Buta Biberaj speaks at a Feb. 13 press conference.

tinue to expand the victim/witness program if reelected.

"The court process is very traumatic for people," she said. "We want to make sure we're able to give them the best path to healing and restoration."

Biberaj asked voters to decide whether to reelect her based on the results of her first term. She said she's delivered on her promise to change the personnel and the culture in the office.

"And we'll continue to do that to make sure that we have the best people in the best positions to continue to keep Loudoun safe," Biberaj said.

"We're looking at cases individually to assess what the root cause of the behavior is and to be solution-based. Because what we don't want to do is what histor-

ically happens in the prosecutor's office: they prosecute somebody and the person's found guilty, they're incarcerated, they're released, and they come out and re-offend and they're prosecuted, convicted, incarcerated and released. There just is no change and it doesn't increase safety to the community. So, we want to be smart on crime," she said.

While crime has remained low since Biberaj took office, critics like her Republican opponent, former Commonwealth's Attorney Robert D. Anderson, say her office has repeatedly botched cases. Anderson said the most egregious failure involved the case of Peter James Lollobrigido. He was accused of beating his wife, Regina Elizabeth Redman-Lollobrigido, in July 2021, but was released on bond.

In September 2021, Lollobrigido allegedly killed his wife with a hammer. Anderson said the killing wouldn't have happened if a prosecutor in Biberaj's office — identified in court records as then-Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney George J. Wooditch Jr. — had asked a judge not to release Lollobrigido on bond.

Redman-Lollobrigido's body was covered with bruises, according to a criminal complaint written by Loudoun County Sheriff's Office Deputy First Class Nikki N. King for the assault case. But Biberaj said her office wasn't initially provided with all evidence, including photos of the injuries. She said that, until this year, the her office was only provided with charging documents and criminal complaints and didn't "regularly get access" to police reports, body camera footage and other visual evidence from the LCSO.

Thomas A. Julia, lead LCSO spokesman, said in an email that that there was "no delay in delivering pertinent information to the Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney and an such assertion is false." (See story, page 22.)

Biberaj said Anderson is distorting her record and criticized him for his record as commonwealth's attorney from 1996 to 2003. Biberaj noted it was on Anderson's watch that Franklin Antonio Carcamo Giron fled Leesburg for El Salvador in 2001 after being arrested and charged with raping a 12-year-old girl. Working with local and federal authorities for two years, Biberaj's office got Carcamo Giron extradited to Loudoun in 2022. He was sentenced to 50 years in prison on Oct. 12.

"He was released and escaped accountability for 21 years after he had raped and impregnated a 12-year-old," Biberaj said. "If Mr. Anderson had not done this job before and didn't know the complexities of the position, I might give him a pass. But for him to pick and choose certain cases is the equivalent of him lying to the community."

Biberaj also said Anderson mishandled the case of Bruce McLaughlin, an attorney who was accused falsely of molesting his children and sentenced to 18

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ABOUT BIBERAJ

Buta Biberaj, a 59-year-old Aldie resident, grew up in the Bronx after immigrating from Montenegro in 1967. She moved to Loudoun County in 1996. Biberaj has been an attorney since 1993, when she founded the Biberaj, Snow & Sinclair law firm. The firm closed in 2019. As an attorney in private practice, she specialized in criminal defense and juvenile cases. She also worked as a senior assistant public defender with the Loudoun Public Defenders Office from 2000 to 2002. Biberaj was also a guardian ad litem (a court-appointed representative) for children and incapacitated adults from 1994 to 2017 and a substitute judge in Virginia's 20th Judicial Circuit (Fauquier, Loudoun and Rappahannock counties) from 2006 to 2017. She was elected as commonwealth's attorney in 2019 and took office in 2020.

See **BIBERAJ 22**

ELECTION

Anderson seeks second stint as commonwealth's attorney

BY EVAN GOODENOW

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Robert D. Anderson said he is running for Loudoun County commonwealth's attorney to restore competence to an office he contends is dysfunctional due to a lack of leadership from the incumbent, Democrat Buta Biberaj.

Anderson, a Republican, was Loudoun's commonwealth's attorney from 1996 through 2003. In an interview, he said the dysfunction is due to high turnover in the office under Biberaj. He cited a county Department of Human Resources statistic that said there has been an 84% turnover rate since Biberaj took office in 2020. Anderson said it's led to prosecutors missing filing deadlines, complaints that evidence isn't being turned over to defense attorneys in a timely manner and dismissed cases.

"The office, quite frankly, from my vantage point of two terms, is in chaos," he said. "[Prosecutors] are not prepared and the people that they're hiring are not well trained."

Anderson, who pledged to run an apolitical office if elected, accused prosecutors of botching numerous cases since Biberaj took office in 2020. The most serious case he cited involved Peter James Lollobrigido, who is charged with beating his wife, Regina Elizabeth Redman-Lollobrigido, to death with a hammer in September 2021. He is set to stand trial on Jan. 29.

In July 2021, Lollobrigido was accused of badly beating his wife, but rather than hold him without bond, Loudoun Juvenile & Domestic Court Judge Avelina S. Jacob released Lollobrigido on bond with an ankle monitor. Anderson said prosecutors should have sought to hold Lollobrigido without bond given the serious injuries Redman-Lollobrigido suffered. (See story, page 22.)

"You just simply can't go into court unprepared. And if you do go into court unprepared, the repercussions from that can be catastrophic," he said. "People have been killed because of a lack of preparation."

When Anderson left office, he oversaw 13 prosecutors for a county of roughly 200,000 people. The county now has about 432,000 residents, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The Common-

wealth's Attorney's Office has about 32 prosecutors.

Anderson noted there was major population growth during his time in office and said he can adapt to overseeing a bigger office with greater responsibilities. Citing a county survey done while he was in office, he said morale was high among his staff. If elected, Anderson said he'll hire highly-skilled, well-prepared prosecutors and he won't micromanage them.

"They know more about the cases when they go into court than anybody else," he said. "I've told them when I was in office, 'I will have your back on anything that you do. If there's a mistake made, we'll deal with it and we'll make sure that it's not made again.'"

Anderson noted his office prosecuted Melvin Irving Shifflett, a serial killer whose crimes included killing a woman and dumping her body near Leesburg in 1978. A Loudoun Circuit Court jury convicted him in 1997.

While Anderson touted his record as commonwealth's attorney, his successor, Republican James E. Plowman — Plowman is now a Loudoun Circuit Court judge — was highly critical of his record when he successfully ran against Anderson in the 2003 election.

At the time, Plowman told the Washington Post that Anderson, who ran that year as an independent, oversaw an office that was "soft on crime and dismisses more cases than almost every other jurisdiction in the state" and communicated poorly with police and county government. In 2011, Plowman told the Times-Mirror that the office was "essentially in turmoil" when he took over in 2004 due to bad relations between police and prosecutors.

Anderson said Plowman's comments amounted to "a political statement made while he was campaigning" and denied Plowman's accusations. Anderson said he expects his office will have a professional relationship with Plowman if he's elected.

Anderson noted that, like Plowman, his office secured 35 to 50 indictments per month. The number has dropped to about a dozen per month under Biberaj, with charges primarily involving sex crimes and violent offenses rather than low-level drug and property crimes.

Anderson said not choosing not to prosecute non-violent crimes adversely affects the quality of life in Loudoun. He



Courtesy Photo

Bob Anderson, Republican candidate for commonwealth's attorney

ABOUT ANDERSON

Robert D. Anderson is a 75-year-old widower, father of two and a resident of Purcellville. He earned a master of business administration degree at Shippensburg University in Pennsylvania and his law degree at George Mason University. Anderson became an attorney in Virginia in 1978. He served as Loudoun County commonwealth's attorney from 1996 to 2003 and is currently managing partner of the Law Office of Robert D. Anderson.

Sources: Bob Anderson for Commonwealth's Attorney, Virginia State Bar

said his office will seek to more indictments for low-level drug offenses and property crimes.

Anderson said if people charged with crimes like petty larceny aren't indicted, they're more likely to become repeat offenders. He said repeated cases of shoplifting have put Loudoun retailers in a bind.

"Without prosecution, these retailers are taking matters into their own hands," Anderson said. "They're closing off entrances and exits and confronting people on their own. That's dangerous."

While saying he will exercise prosecutorial discretion, Anderson said Biberaj's criminal justice reform agenda is jeopardizing public safety.

"This is not a legislative office. This is a prosecutorial office," he said. "And it's not a social agency."

Like Biberaj, Anderson said he supports Virginia's red flag law, which allows authorities to temporarily remove guns from people deemed a danger to themselves or others and allows the gun owners to go to court to get them back. Anderson said that, before the law was passed, he had a client facing a drunken driving charge who was an Afghanistan War veteran. The man fatally shot himself the

night before his trial. "If this law had been in place and firearms had been removed, maybe that wouldn't have happened," Anderson said.

Biberaj said in a news release that said "abortion rights are on the ballot in Loudoun County" and that she would "never prosecute a woman or their doctors for reproductive health decisions." Abortion is legal in Virginia in the first and second trimesters and in the third trimester to save the life of the mother. However, Republican Gov. Glenn A. Youngkin supports banning most abortions after 15 weeks rather than the current 26-week threshold.

Nonetheless, Anderson said Biberaj was playing politics by raising the issue because the law hasn't changed. He said it was unfair to ask him under what circumstances he would prosecute a woman or her doctor if he were elected and the law changed.

"I am not going to prosecute a woman for having an abortion under the circumstances that we have right now," he said. "Or any other circumstances."

Anderson elaborated in a Facebook post.

"If any far-right Republican commonwealth's attorney dares to even speak about prosecuting a woman (for reproductive healthcare) I will speak out loudly against them," he said. "Buta Biberaj is a complete disaster as a prosecutor and her last resort is to lie about me and about a prosecutor's role, because of her multiple failures protecting our community in Loudoun County."



Times-Mirror/Coy Ferrell

Sean Kennedy, the president of Virginians for Safe Communities, leads a rally on Feb. 13 to advocate for a special election to recall Democratic Loudoun County Commonwealth's Attorney Buta Biberaj.

FUNDRAISING THIS CYCLE

Biberaj

Cash contributions: \$649,372
Top donors: Hasan Biberaj, of New York, New York (\$220,000); Stanislas Vilgrain, of Sterling (\$65,500); Sabria Biberaj, of Falls Church (\$56,100); Aranit Ahmataj, of Gardiner, New York (\$52,500); Herself (\$41,000); Edna Felix, of New York, New York (\$30,500)

Source: Virginia Public Access Project

Anderson

Cash contributions: \$54,682
Top donors: James E. Miller, of Waterford (\$10,000); Glenn Kautt, of Port Orange, Florida (\$5,000); Daniel D. Smith, of Leesburg (\$2,500); Patrick Stump, of Purcellville (\$2,500); Michael Wheeler, of Leesburg (\$2,500); JK Land Holdings (\$2,000)

ELECTION

Biberaj, Sheriff's Office dispute who's at fault in deadly case

BY EVAN GOODENOW

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In 2021, a Sterling man allegedly killed his wife with a hammer less than two months after he was charged with beating her.



Lollobrigido

Loudoun County Commonwealth's Attorney Buta Biberaj is at odds with her Republican challenger, Robert D. Anderson, and the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office over who bears responsibility for releasing the man from jail while the domestic violence case was pending.

The suspect, Peter James Lollobrigido, was charged in July 2021 with beating his wife, Regina Elizabeth Redman-Lollobrigido. She was covered with bruises when she taken to Inova Loudoun Hospital after the incident, according to a criminal complaint filed by LCSO Deputy First Class Nikki N. King.

A bail determination checklist said the "violent nature of the charges makes safety for victim and community a concern." It also noted that Redman-Lollobrigido was granted an emergency protection order against Peter Lollobrigido.

But rather than hold him without

bond, Loudoun Juvenile & Domestic Court Judge Avelina S. Jacob released Lollobrigido on a \$5,000 unsecured bond with an ankle monitor. Then-Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney George J. Wooditch Jr. handled the case and there is no record of him objecting to bond, according to court records. Wooditch is no longer with the office.

Lollobrigido, who reportedly confessed to police, is accused of killing his wife in their home in September 2021 while out on bond. He's scheduled to stand trial in Loudoun Circuit Court on Nov. 27.

Biberaj said in an Oct. 18 interview that, in July 2021, the Sheriff's Office typically only provided charging documents and criminal complaints. She said her office wasn't provided with photos of the bruises or a police report.

"That's been my challenge for 3 1/2 years," she said. "Until this year, we didn't get regular access to police reports, body worn camera footage and other visual evidence." Biberaj said her office didn't get police reports on the July 2021 allegations until after Redman-Lollobrigido's death.

But in an email, Thomas A. Julia, lead LCSO spokesman, said his agency "routinely and promptly fulfills all evidentiary requests" by the LCCA. He said it was a "false" assertion by Biberaj that there was a delay in providing "pertinent information" to her office.

Julia said that the lead prosecutor on the case sent an email on July 27, 2021, to the lead investigator requesting a "brief synopsis" of the case so that "whomever handles this case on Friday will have more information other than what may be in the [criminal] complaint." Julia said the detective replied with a synopsis within minutes and the two later spoke by phone.

On July 30, 2021, Lollobrigido was granted bond. "The recommendation of Community Corrections and the LCSO to OCA was that Mr. Lollobrigido be held without bond but the OCA instead asked for bond with a GPS ankle monitor," Julia said.

Prosecutors sought additional information about the case on Aug. 26, 2021, to prepare for a Sept. 9, 2021 trial, according to Julia. It included the case report, 911 call audio and police video. He said the Sheriff's Office provided the information on Aug. 27, 2021. Redman-Lollobrigido was beaten with a hammer on Sept. 19, 2021, and died a week later.

At a Sept. 13, 2021, trial in JDR court to request a two-year protective order against her husband, Redman-Lollobrigido testified he flew into a rage in July 2021 when she told him she quit one of her jobs. She said he repeatedly beat her over a two-day period, choking her and slamming her head against a wall when she tried to escape their home.

"I'm like, this was the worst it's ever been in terms of violence. So I said to him, 'You've got to stop. You're going to knock me out. Please stop doing this. Just calm down,'" Redman-Lollobrigido testified, according to a transcript of the trial. "The next thing I know, he's dragging me through the kitchen, my forehead against the cabinets. He threw me around the living room several times, finally got me on the couch, at which point, Peter put his knees on my knees and laid me back and held me down and just slapped me back and forth countless times."

The morning after the alleged beatings, Redman-Lollobrigido said her husband wrote her a note saying he needed help. "I wrote back to him, 'No, I need to get away from you,'" she testified.

Anderson said in an Oct. 17 interview that prosecutors' failure to seek to keep Lollobrigido in jail was "catastrophic" for the victim. He attributed the incident to what he said was Biberaj's poor leadership.

On Dec. 13, 2021, the Sheriff's Office began providing all initial arrest reports and supplemental reports to prosecutors on a daily basis, according to Julia, who said it represents "best practices." This year, the process was streamlined to allow for info to be transmitted online rather than through compact discs or printed copies.

Buta Biberaj defends 'smart on crime' approach

BIBERAJ from 18

years imprisonment after a jury convicted him in 1998. After a judge ruled that McLaughlin's attorney provided an inadequate defense by failing to compare transcripts of the children's interviews to the audio recordings, Anderson chose to prosecute McLaughlin again. A jury acquitted McLaughlin in 2002, but Anderson told the Washington Post he disagreed with their verdict.

McLaughlin sued his defense attorneys and also faulted Anderson, saying Anderson tried to use him as a "springboard to reelection."

Biberaj has also criticized Anderson for not securing a more substantial sentence in 2002 for a Broad Run High School band instructor who had sexual encounters with his students. The teacher was sentenced to six months in jail.

During her term, Biberaj has received her own share of criticism. In January, for instance, there was bipartisan fallout after a letter she wrote to judges in December 2022 was leaked to the press.

The letter said that her office would have law enforcement officers — rather than prosecutors — handle some minor misdemeanor cases in Loudoun General District Court. She wrote it is "not feasible" for prosecutors to prosecute all misdemeanor cases due to a lack of staff and there was a steep increase in activity after the courts reopened after being closed for some cases during the pandemic.

Biberaj said her prosecutors handle 70 dockets per week among circuit, general district and juvenile and domestic relations courts. She said that not all minor misdemeanor cases were handled by prosecutors when Anderson and Plowman were in office.

Biberaj said prosecutors review all misdemeanor cases but the cases they don't handle are Class 3 and Class 4 misdemeanors that don't involve jail time. Those cases include charges like public intoxication and non-injury hit-and-run crashes. Prosecutors also aren't involved in Class 1 or Class 2 misdemeanors in which defendants plead guilty at arraignment. Biberaj said her letter clarified which cases police or prosecutors would be presenting evidence to judges and all cases are prosecuted.

Biberaj defended her track record and the performance of her prosecutors, who she said handle hundreds of cases. She said that her critics are cherry picking cases where the charges were dismissed or where a jury acquitted the defendant.

"We are limited and hampered by, one, the information we receive from law enforcement, and two, the consistency of victims and witnesses testimony," she said. "Our prosecutors are doing the the yeoman's work of being able to present cases and manage cases that come to our office for prosecution."

Of the 44 people who left the commonwealth's attorney's office between Jan.



Times-Mirror/Coy Ferrell

Buta Biberaj answers a question during Democratic Party primary candidates forum on June 1.

1, 2020, and Jan. 31, 2023, 28 were hired by Biberaj, according to county documents. Nonetheless, Biberaj said turnover in her office is similar to when Anderson and Plowman were in office.

Responding to criticism related to the hiring of a convicted sex offender to work in her office as a paralegal in 2021, Biberaj said the paralegal never had access to any files. She said he attended an orientation on his first day and was fired the next day after the office learned of his record. Biberaj said that, until the hiring, her office relied on the county to do background checks. Her office now conducts background checks, she said.

Biberaj has had a contentious relationship with Republican Sheriff Michael E. Chapman. After his deputies mistakenly

released a fatal stabbing suspect from the Loudoun County Adult Detention Center in October 2022, Chapman blamed Biberaj for the release. However, she provided the media with court documents verifying that moving the case from general district court to circuit court was done properly.

Biberaj said that she and Chapman rarely speak, but said she's "always hopeful" that communications with him will improve. Biberaj and her prosecutors have often praised LCSO investigators after successful prosecutions and she said prosecutors try to have good relations with investigators.

Since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade in 2022 and Republican Gov. Glenn A. Youngkin seeks to convince the General Assembly to make abortion in Virginia illegal after 15 weeks — rather than the current 26 — Biberaj said abortion is on the ballot and has made the prospect of stricter abortion laws part of her campaign message.

If the legislature passes a 15-week ban, Biberaj said she's "not aware of any circumstances" in which she would prosecute a woman or her doctor over an abortion. She said restricting abortion would endanger women's lives.

"Doctors will fear prosecution and will not help women have access to health care," Biberaj said. "It's not a matter of defying the law. We have to use the law to keep people alive and safe."