




# Archer's John C. Connell Wins Dismissal in Full for Monmouth County Sheriff's Officers in New Jersey Supreme Court Civil Rights Suit

Press Releases

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The New Jersey Supreme Court recently dismissed a civil rights lawsuit brought against three Monmouth County sheriff's officers by a Matawan, New Jersey resident. **John C. Connell**, a Partner in the firm's Government Litigation/Civil Rights and Appellate Groups, successfully defended the sheriff's officers before the New Jersey Supreme Court.

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In a decision dated July 13, 2015, the New Jersey Supreme Court unanimously reversed the decisions of two lower courts and dismissed the claim against the officers. The court ruled that the sheriff's officers were entitled to qualified immunity that shielded them from a civil suit brought by a Matawan resident who was arrested on a gun charge, even though he lawfully owned the weapon. The court cited confusion in the law about where a registered gun owner can carry a weapon without a carrying permit.

In her written opinion of the Court, Justice Jaynee LaVecchia noted, "The doctrine of qualified immunity shields law enforcement officers from personal liability for civil rights violations when the officers are acting under color of law in the performance of official duties. As both federal and state case law on this immunity doctrine recognize, members of law enforcement must be permitted to perform their duties without being encumbered by the specter of being sued personally for damages, unless their performance is not objectively reasonable. Thus, the defense's protection is denied only to officers who are plainly incompetent in the performance of their duties or who knowingly violate the law."

"In a time when law-enforcement is under such incredible pressure, locally and nationally, in terms of its ability to win public confidence, this is the kind of case that says they are doing good work," said John C. Connell, Partner with Archer. "A decision like this helps law enforcement professionals do their jobs better and will allow them to better protect the public."

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## Related People



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