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## \$14-million payout approved in L.A. wrongful-conviction case



Los Angeles Times



The L.A. City Council on Wednesday approved a \$14-million settlement with Andrew Wilson, whose murder conviction was thrown out by a judge in 2017. Above, Wilson leaving jail, holding hands with his daughters. (Nick Ut / Associated Press)

BY CHRISTIAN MARTINEZ | STAFF WRITER

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The Los Angeles City Council approved a \$14-million settlement Wednesday for Andrew Wilson, who spent more than three decades behind bars for a [murder conviction vacated in 2017](#).

Wilson was convicted of the 1984 robbery and murder of 21-year-old Christopher Hanson but always maintained his innocence.

His case was taken up by [Loyola Law School's innocence project](#), which raised questions about the methods used by a Los Angeles police detective to have a witness identify Wilson as the suspect.

The conviction was vacated by a Los Angeles County judge and Wilson was released after 32 years behind bars. He was later found to be factually innocent of the crime.



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The settlement, approved in an 11-0 vote, stems from a [2018 civil rights lawsuit](#) filed by Wilson against the city, Los Angeles County and Richard Marks, the LAPD detective who oversaw the case, regarding the methods used to identify Wilson as a suspect.

The county settled with Wilson for \$1.5 million in 2020.

In a confidential memo to the City Council reviewed by The Times, the city's lawyers expressed doubts about their ability to win at trial, warning that a verdict against the city could result in a monetary reward as high as \$32 million.

The settlement is equivalent to around \$440,000 per year of incarceration, an amount similar to payments approved by the council in other wrongful conviction cases, the lawyers said in the memo.

The settlement now requires the mayor's approval.

Wilson's case demonstrates that investigative procedures regarding witnesses' identification of suspects need to be reformed, his attorneys said Wednesday,

"This case highlights that until cities and counties institute independent identification procedures, where the investigating officers aren't involved in the ID process itself, we will continue to have wrongful convictions like this one and government entities will continue to face substantial liability," said Kevin LaHue, an attorney with McLane, Bednarski & Litt.

Wilson's conviction was thrown out in part due to alleged practices of witness manipulation and witness leading brought to light by the innocence project. Erika Jerez, a deputy district attorney in 2017, conceded that "cumulative errors" had deprived Wilson of his constitutional right to a fair trial.



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The lawsuit alleged that Marks had directed a witness to a photo of Wilson when shown a photo lineup of potential suspects. The witness had already identified two other men who were quickly ruled out as suspects by police.

"What about him?" Marks asked the witness, referring to Wilson's photo.

The witness then identified Wilson.

The practice has come under fire by both prosecutors and defense attorneys.

"You took 32 years of my life," Wilson said in a 2018 interview. "You can't give that back to me."

Last week, a federal jury awarded \$17 million in damages to the family of a mentally disabled man who was fatally shot by an off-duty Los Angeles police officer inside a Costco in Corona.

Last summer, the city awarded Gabriel Abikzer \$23 million after he was struck by a city employee driving a truck, resulting in the amputation of both of his legs.

*Times staff writer David Zahniser contributed to this report.*

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Christian Martinez is a Metro reporter covering breaking news at the Los Angeles Times. He previously wrote for the USA Today network of newspapers including the Ventura County Star, where he covered the Thomas and Woolsey wildfires and the Borderline mass shooting, the Spectrum & Daily News in Utah and the Lansing State Journal in Michigan. He was born and raised in Southern California and attended Saint Mary's College of California.

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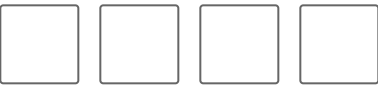
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