10/15/2014 9:21:03 AM
Amalia Rodriguez-Mendoza
District Clerk
Travis County
D-1-GN-14-004290

D-1-GN-14-004290

**Don Zimmerman,** *Plaintiff,* 

In the \_\_\_\_\_ District Court Travis County, Texas

vs.

Austin Investigative Reporting Project d/b/a The Austin Bulldog, and Ken Martin;
Defendants.

Plaintiff's Original Petition

To the Honorable Judge of Said Court:

Now Comes Donald Zimmerman ("Zimmerman"), complaining of and about the Austin Investigative Reporting Project d/b/a The Austin Bulldog ("AIRP"), and Ken Martin ("Martin") (collectively, "Defendants"). Plaintiffs cause of action sounds in defamation, libel, and/or slander, and Plaintiff would show the following:

### Discovery Control Plan Level

1. Pursuant to Rule 190.1 of the Texas Rule; of Civil Procedure, Plaintiff intends to conduct discovery in this case under Level 3.

### Parties and Service

- 2. Plaintiff Don Zimmerman is a resident of Travis County, Texas.
- 3. Defendant AIRP is a non-profit corporation whose registered agent is Ken Martin, a co-defendant, and has an address for service of process at 509 E. 8th Street, Austin, Texas 78705.
- Defendant Kep Martin is a person residing in Travis County and can be served at 509 E.
   8th Street Austin, Texas 78705, the AIRP place of service.

### Jurisdiction and Venue

5. The subject matter in controversy is within the jurisdictional limits of this Court. Venue is mandatory in Travis County under Texas Civil Practices and Remedies Code Section 15.017 because this suit involves libel and this is the county where Plaintiff resided when this claim accrued and Plaintiff so elects to prosecute this claim in Travis County.

### Facts

- 6. Zimmerman is a resident of Travis County.
- 7. Zimmerman is a candidate for the Austin City Counsel, District 6, in the 2014 election cycle.
- 8. AIRP is a local weblog ("blog") using an assumed business name of "The Austin Bulldog." While the website "About" lists many "potential" authors, the primary author/editor contributing to the site is Ken Martin.
- 9. On October 9, 2014, at approximately 3:10 pm, Ken Martin published an article on his blog titled "Candidate Lost Custody Over Abuse." A true and confect copy of the article is attached as Exhibit 1. An email teaser of the article came cut on October 9, 2014, at approximately 4:42 pm. It bore the same title. A true and confect copy of the email teaser is attached as Exhibit 2.
- 10. Within both the email and the article are several defamatory, false statements. In addition, the email and article themselves, as a whole, convey a defamatory message.

# **Email Defamatory Statements**

- 11. The email title "Candidate Lost Custody Over Abuse" is a false statement. Mr. Zimmerman did not "lose custody." Texas is a state that utilizes the conservatorship model, and not the custody model. No abuse was ever testified to in court.
- 12. The email subtitle reads that that "District 6 Council candidate Don Zimmerman injured, alienated daughter, court records state." This is a false statement. No court order or opinion of any kind ever states that Zimmerman alienated his daughter. You are demanded to retract that statement. Mr. Zimmerman never alienated his daughter.
- 13. The email states that Mr. Zimmerman had "permanent loss of parental rights through civil court action." This is a false statement. Mr. Zimmerman did not "permanent[ly]" lose parental rights. This was repeated in the sidebar column to the email as well. Mr. Zimmerman is still a possessory conservator of his daughter. Permanent loss of parental rights prevents any parenting whatsoever.
- 14. The email states that the doctor reports literally state that Mr. Zimmerman "on separate occasions" "inflicted bruises, pulled Marina's hair, pushed her, and 'threatened to kill

her." This is a false statement. At no point does the email express that these statements are not the doctor's conclusions but are pure allegations, and that they are hearsay transcribed by the doctor.

### **Blog Defamatory Statements**

- 15. The blog title "Candidate Lost Custody Over Abuse" is a false statement. Mr. Zimmerman did not "lose custody." Texas is a state that utilizes the concentratorship model, and not the custody model. No abuse was ever testified to in court.
- 16. The blog subtitle reads that that "District 6 Council candidate Don Zin merman injured, alienated daughter, court records state." This is a false statement. No court order or opinion of any kind ever states that Zimmerman alienated his daughter. You are demanded to retract that statement. Mr. Zimmerman never alienated his daughter
- 17. The blog states that Mr. Zimmerman had "permanent less of parental rights through civil court action." This is a false statement. Mr. Zimmerman did not "permanent[ly]" lose parental rights. This is repeated in the sidebar wlumn as well. Mr. Zimmerman is still a conservator of his daughter. Permanent loss of parental rights prevents any parenting whatsoever.
- 18. The blog states that the doctor reports literally state that Mr. Zimmerman "on separate occasions" "inflicted bruises, pulled Marina's hair, pushed her, and 'threatened to kill her.'" This is a false statement. At no point does the email express that these statements are not the doctor's conclusions but are pure allegations, and that they are hearsay transcribed by the doctor.
- 19. The three statements regarding the doctor's reports in the blog never state that the statements of inleged abuse by the doctor are repeated hearsay. It never makes the distinction that these are all reported by the daughter but never confirmed by any external investigation, and that the doctor's opinion is based solely on the child's allegations.
- 20. This has caused Plaintiff damages.

### A. CLAIMS

### Statutory and Common Law Defamation

- 21. Defendants published a statement on the email and blog asserting as fact that Plaintiff had permanently lost parental rights.
- 22. Defendant's statement referred to Plaintiffs by name.
- 23. Defendants' statements injured Plaintiff's reputations and thereby exposed him to public hatred, contempt or ridicule, or financial injury and impeached his honesty, in egrity, virtue, and reputation and exposed Plaintiff to public hatred, ridicule, at a financial injury.
- 24. Defendants' email and website statements were defamatory under the common law.

  Defendants' statements:
- 25. Defendants' statement was false because:
- 25.1. It juxtaposed hearsay facts from a doctor's report with the phrase "states" that Zimmerman "inflicted bruises, pulled Marina's hair, rushed her, and 'threatened to kill her," all without making it clear that the allegations were hearsay and that the doctor was merely transcribing an allegation and not making a conclusion that Zimmerman made any abuse.
- 25.2. It stated that Zimmerman lost custody. That is not a legal term used in Texas. Zimmerman still is a possessory concervator.
- 25.3. It claimed that Zimmerman injured his daughter and alienated his daughter but no court record found that he injured or alienated his daughter.
- 25.4. No court record found hat Zimmerman's "aggression in disciplining his daughter" resulted in "permanent loss of parental rights."
- 25.5. At no point was there any finding that Zimmerman threatened to kill his daughter in the court order (r opinion. This is both defamation *per se* and *per quod*.

### **Exemplary Damages**

26. Plaintiff's injury resulted from Defendants' malice, knowledge of the statement's falsity and/or reckless disregard for the truth, which entitled Plaintiffs to exemplary damages under Texas Civil Practices & Remedies Code Section 41.003(a)(2).

### Conditions Precedent

27. In accordance with the Texas Civil Practices and Remedies Code Section 73.055, a defamation retraction letter was sent to the opposing party. Any conditions precedent have occurred.

### Jury demand

28. A jury demand has been made and Plaintiffs has tendered the jury fee.

### Prayer for Relief

WHEREFORE, PREMISES CONSIDERED, Plaintiff requests that the Court issue citation for Defendants to appear and answer, and that Plaintiff be availed a judgment against Defendants for the following:

- 28.1. Actual damages.
- 28.2. Exemplary damages.
- 28.3. Prejudgment and postjudgment interest.
- 28.4. Court costs.
- 28.5. Any other relief to which Plaintiffs are entitled in law or equity.

Respectfully submitted,

CASEY LAW OFFICE, P.C.

/s/ Stephen Casey Stephen Casey Texas Bar No. 24065015

600 Round Rock West Drive, Suite 602 Round Rock, Texas 78681 Telephone: 512-257-1324 Fax: 512-853-4098

### CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that a true and correct copy of Plaintiffs' Original Petition was served upon Defendants by the manner and method indicated below on this day, June /s/ Stephen Casey Stephen Casey; Counsel for Plaint 9 11, 2014. el for Plaintiff

Le for Plain

Via private process server



### Exhibit 1

Contribute Blow the Whistle

About

Archives

Search

FAOS

Documents

Contact Us



(9 votes, average 3.67 out of 5)













# Candidate Lost Custor(©

District 6 Council candidate s Court records state

> 9 The Aug **10**2undeg 2014



not delegate to or rely an another person to make dile report

ravis County Taxpayers Union, is an

wiers the U.S. Sucreme Court

Ashna Zimescerran, resulted in corrected physical and environal

ase include titree reports from Deborah Weitsch, MD, from Jawy 2011, You reports

inducate the costor would contact Child Protective Services (CPS). Such reporting to Dec within 48 hours by Texas Family Code Section 261.101, which states, "A professional

"I not a call from CPS and conculted a couple of equipmy frlands and was told when her are made.

Deptor's second examination - January 28, 2011, the domoniound from Marina had a bruise on

"(Clarifound concert of her dad being physically forceful with her." The record states, "(Will keep, goodness for OPS cose worker."

Dector's thing examination – February 11, 2011, the record critics, "rior dad was naish with her yearenday and pushed her egainst the microwave and now the has right hip pain and right shoulder pain. ... Her Jad has been yelling at her and threatened to he has but didn't. He has threatened to kill her and the has loans of thim) shooting her. Her parents are wouled but sho needs therapy but her dad relices."

Zynmermen's threat to hit Warina was overheard by her mother and steptathor in a phone call that she made to her mother during fleet controduction, according to a sword displayer file tiby her also believe Eric "Arti" Fox.

The Hebruary 11, 2011, depict's report also states, "Concerns of abuse with by and shoulder strain. Percommended if CPS does not intervene this could lead to a life that Dining situation, I recommend they pershallong togal full custody as soon as positiols. We all ponted: CPS about the product

For prevention the doctor related, "Cornealing: Competito violence," — Ed this was the coast occurring cause of horizoide in Texas and in our large and needs to be factor scriptury. [Tiple statetion searchs to be appreciating another to OPS investigation?

### Themselmen's respons

Witen gussioned in the Tuesday interview about the alloy of Impatio but his daughan Zimmaman replied, "Tisat's an outsight the None of this less ever been shown to me."

When reminded that the ulted medical remote all  $r_1 \oplus r_2$  files for his discrete case, Zanmerman applied. These altegetions are news to see. Ive is, or seen than before. These are offensive the and the news seen them before. On not straid, spained these are the  $s^*$ 

Internan said he has a liecese to early a Colombia harogen and be has gurs and amorphism to the books.

"(Botherirova) demended i move all y ... "vand ammunition and of the house," Zimmerman said.
"Why would that demand be made? I can agree to no it in refuse to up it. She's a brillian trampoleur and iter, if I spree to me a the guns and ammunition out of the house, than him agreeing i'm a violem person with a unit be musted accord guns and ammunition, if I do not agree. I'm in dealer and won's acknown, you that him a violent and dangerous person. The denivirous a lia.

Tim 54 and never in my life have obreen victent spainscunyone. Fice never shown vicience. Eget engry. I'm angry now with a comeone lied and attacks my character?

Zummednen mer Kolmesa "Kelye" Bochenkom in Kley, Ukralne, when he was there receiving English as a recond "Tiguege. She was one of his students. They met again when she was a student at Taxas ("Kis Emiversity" in Onliege Station. They were madied in Brazes County December 6, 10x2, when he was 58 and she was 20.

Marina was to itin January 1028

A Final Decree of Civeros was approved May 27, 2005. The marriage was "dissolved on the ground Consupportability," which is defined in Family Code Section 6.001 as "without regard to fault."

### Mother followed doctor's sevice

The doctor recommended purening full legal custody and Buchenkova quickly fild an. On February 18, 2011, she pathemed for a Temporary Rectraining Order, included to the pathlon was a request for the court to order Zimmerman to abend parenting division and anyer-namagement classice.



loonentove told. The Austin Builday she warred Ziramerman to take those classes o trut he foodd modify the hehavior that brought us into itrat conflict circuition in he first alsoe."

sked ii he took indee deesset, Ziromeanen replied, "i did noc"

r responde to Economic von Extende, the open belied an Agreed Tomporary Numbron to bor Zimmerman from consciing ar communicating with his delighter Tasting possession of her vicins, that here been astablened by the divince decres

Reproduces—Asked to comment on the injunction. Zimmerman paid, "The modest is that with perola writing to be under oath bin not going to see my daughter any teore, if I cersid what would have come next would be take alregations of serval abuse," Zimmerman end.

"I we seen this had morte before," he adden. "I won't sen my daughtar enymore. I won't let you play this game."

There has been no communication between Emmanmen and his daugher in more than three years, but he and Ecchenicova said.

Corrunt case revised, concluded

On March 18, 9014 Zurmennama new aborder, Round Problemann **Stephen Casev** of the Casev

Any Otice PC, tiled a motion to enter a finet order in the case, sixting that Zimmerman's freferensing with the minor child has become tarry non-existent, ... Hospendent remains willing and able to communicate but until this influitod by the remarking third there is no energe Jun."

Bonnankova told. The Ausil's Bulldoy that Wansa has not seen her rather in more than three years over does not want to.

The girl's mather responded to Casey's arction by tiling petitions or her own in April and June of this year.

th a final agreed order tiled. Aske 16, the court ordered that Kummermen "shall have no accessantor of or access to the child."

As period that order, the court found that "Dechenkova this agreed to make Alpha medical support expenses, and that "Dechenkova this agreed to make Alpha medical support expenses, and that "Dechenkova this agreed to make Alpha medical surrurn."

"We wanted Dan out of our life and that was the easies) way to achieve "ant," Bocheckons told. The Angun Bulldag, "It was the easiest way to close the deal, and wy "We up that money in exchange for the treadors of our resugator."

The court strict in June also removed the requirement for Misting & live in Austin. One recently moved to Bound Stock, New Jersey, with her mother and elegibles.

On the "About Don Zimmerman" page on his compaign, we'll re, Zimmerman states, "I have one remarkable developer. Markin Losna Zimmerman."

But the girt long ago null asing her father's name, in 200 and 2013 she vion madets in fencing competition and parformed classical pizno music pa Oznac Bochaukova, hor mother's insided come.

. "She says the will take my name locally when the 18," Bottonkova said.

### E. Persional t

Final Decree of Divorce In the Matter of the Marriage of Kateryna and Donald Shelly Zimmerman (24 pages, such reductions

District Court 201st Judicial Distric . Travis County, Texas, No. D-1-05-000710 (6% pages, twis reductions). The doctor is record (37e on pages 12.46)

Don Zimmerman campaign vehsite

Travis County Taxpayers Union

### Comments



### #2 **Leo** 2014-10-14 00:23

- Editor 187

Calling someone a child abuser is stating he is a criminal, which is liable I am sure. The source of information that you are confirming this man is a child abuser. (Showing the public the information about Nr. Zimmarman is fair, yot condemning him for child abuse is not?)

0

EDITOR STATEMENT: +3 #7 Editor 2014-10-09 20:24

Re: #8: David Berry:

(If you want to ignore a person's character and focus only on what he says then you're missing a crucial element of the qualifications to serve in elective office. And in judging a person's character, I don't think there's anything treatevant about child abuse.)

Quote

#3 regarding whether a candidate is a public figure, please see http://iaw.justia.com/constitution/us/amendment-01/45-defamation.html, which I quote in part:

"Moreover, candidates for public office were subject to the Times rule (this refers to New York Times Co. v. Sullivan) and comment on their character or past conduct, public or private, insofar as it touches upon their fitness for office, is protected."

"Candidates for public office, the Court has said, place their whole lives before the public, and it is difficult to see what criticisms could not be related to their filness."

in Monitor Patriot Co. v. Roy. 401 U.S. 265, 274-75 (1971), the Court said: "The principal activity of a candidate in our political system, his 'office,' so to speak, consists in putting before the voters every conceivable aspect of his public and private life that ha thinks may lead the electorate to gain a good impression of him. ... And the candidate who vaunts his sputiess record and starting integrity cannot convincingly dry "Foul" when an opponent or an industricus reporter attempts to demonstrate the contrary Quote

Quote

**JComments** 

1 2 3 4 Refresh comments list RSS feed for comments to this post Add comment ] Name (required) E-mell (required, but will not com
efresh

leftesh

Sitemap

From: Don Zimmerman

Subject: FW: Fwd: Candidate lost custody over abuse

Date: October 9, 2014 at 5:33 PM

To:

Sent from my Android phone using TouchDown (www.nitrodesk.com)

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Ken Martin: The Austin Bulldog" < ken@heaustinbulldog.org>

Date: October 9, 2014, 4:42:09 PM CDT

To:

Subject: Candidate lost custody over abuse

Reply-To: ken@sheaustinbulidog.org



Bulletproof Investigative Reporting

# The Aus©n Bulldog News Alert

# Due diligence reporting needed to inform voters.

Don Zimmerman, District 6 candidate for city council, in response to our investigation of the abuse of his daughter claims he has not seen the records of doctor examinations upon which the child abuse is based. But these records are recoily available in the Travis County District Clerk's office as part of his divorce case. That's where we purchased them.

The divorce case that began in 2005 heated up in early 2011 with three

# **Candidate Lost Custody Over Abuse**

District 6 Council candidate Don Zimmerman injured, alienated daughter, court records state



Don Zimmerman

District 6 candidate Donald Shelly "Don" Zimmerman, founder of the Travis County Taxpayers Union, is an aggressive leader who as president of a municipal utility district brought two lawsuits, one of which resulted in winning a case before the U.S. Supreme

But aggression in disciplining his daughter, Marina Zimmerman, resulted in documented physical and emotional damage and permanent loss of parental rights through civil court action.

Court.

Files from a Travis County District Court case include three reports from Deborah Neitsch, MD, from early 2011. The reports

incidents, and resulted in an Agreed Temporary Injunction that barred him from contacting, communicating with, or taking possession of the girl. The case was concluded just four months ago and resulted in making permanent Zimmerman's loss of rights.

The Austin Bulldog operates as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, so your donation is tax-deductible. <u>Donate</u> now.

Thank you! -- Ken Martin

Join Our Mailing List!

Follow Us on Twitter

### Find us on Facebook

Like our work? Then please click this Facebook link and "like" us there, too.



state that on separate occasions Zimmerman inflicted bruises, pulled Marina's hair, pushed her, and "threatened to kill her." The doctor contacted Child Protective Services as required by state law.

"I got a call from CPS and consulted a couple of attorney friends and was told when lies are made you should demand proof of the allegations and if don't get proof you should not cooperate," Zimmerman told *The Austin Bulldog* in a Tuesday telephone interview.

When questioned about the alleged threat to kill is daughter, Zimmerman said, "That's an outright he. None of this has ever been shown to me," despite the fact these records are part of the files for his divorce seconds.

To read the story and access a 24-page file about Zimmerman's divorce and a 52-page PDF containing court and doctor's records, click here.

### Are we doing a good job?



We're small. We're corappy. We aren't going to change the world, but with voor help we can make a difference in our little corner of it.

If this is the kind of reporting that's important to you, then we would certainly welcome your tax-deductible contribution.

If you've got ideas, suggestions, feedback, constructive criticism, story ideas, or just want to tell us what you think, please e-mail me at ken@theausti bulldog.org or call me at 512-474-1022.

--Ken Martin, editor

### forward email

Update Profile/Email Address | ∫ apid removal with SafeUnsubscribe™ | Privacy Policy.



The Austin Bulldog ? O. Box 4400 | Austin | TX | 78765

## **CIVIL CASE INFORMATION SHEET**

Cause Number (for clerk use only):			COURT (FOR CLERK USE ONLY):			
STYLED Don Zimmerman v. Austin Investigative Reporting Project, et al. (e.g., John Smith v. All American Insurance Co; In re Mary Ann Jones; In the Matter of the Estate of George Jackson)						
health case or when a post-judgm the time of filing. This sheet, appr	nent petition for modification for modification for the Texas Judervice of pleading or	ication or motion for licial Council, is inten	enforcement is filed in a ded to collect information	a family law case on that will be use	e. The informati ed for statistical	vil, family law, probate, or mental on should be the best available at purposes only. It neither replaces a discovery request, response, or
1. Contact information for perso	on completing case in	formation sheet:	Names of parties in	case:	Person	or en <sup>ri</sup> t, completing sheet is:
			P1 : :000 \ P : :	Plaintiff(s)/Petitioner(s):    XAttorney for Laintiff/Petitioner   Pro Se Franciff/Petitioner		
Name:	Email:		Plaintiff(s)/Petitioner	` /		V-D Agency
Stephen Casey info.caseylawoffice@gmail.co			m Don Zimmerman			
Address: Telephone:					Additions	al Bartias in Child Support Case
595 Round Rock West D	324			aditiona	al Parties in Child Support Case:	
Ste 102 City/State/Zip: Fax:			Defendant(s)/Respondent(s):  Austin Investigative			
Round Rock, TX 78681 (512) 853-4098		098	Reporting Project, Non-Custodial Pa		todial Parent:	
<u> </u>		d/b/a/ The		Tion customarian		
Signature:	State Bar No:		Bulldog; Ken warti			
	24065015		[Attach additional page as ne	ecessar so list all partie	esl —	
2. Indicate case type, or identify	the most important	issue in the case (sele	•			
	Civil			1	Fam	ily Law
						Post-judgment Actions
Contract Debt/Contract	Injury or Dai  ☐Assault/Battery		Real Property	Marriage R  ☐ Annulmen		(non-Title IV-D) ☐Enforcement
☐Consumer/DTPA	Construction	Co	ndemnatio :	Declare M		☐Modification—Custody
☐Debt/Contract☐Fraud/Misrepresentation	☑Defamation  Malpractice		tition iet Tit e	Divorce ⊠With Cl	hildren	☐ Modification—Other  Title IV-D
Other Debt/Contract:	Accounting	Tre	espars to Try Title	□No Chil		Enforcement/Modification
Foreclosure	□Legal □Medical	Otl	ner Property:			Paternity
☐Home Equity—Expedited	Other Profession	onal				☐Reciprocals (UIFSA) ☐Support Order
Other Foreclosure	Liability:		elated to Criminal			
☐Franchise ☐Insurance	☐Motor Vehicle Ac		Matters	Other Fa	mily Law	Parent-Child Relationship
Landlord/Tenant	Premises	+ □Ex	punction	☐Enforce F	-	Adoption/Adoption with
□ Non-Competition	Product Liability  ☐Asbestos/Silica		lgment Nisi n-Disclosure	Judgment □Habeas Corpus		Termination   TChild Protection
☐ Partnership☐ Other Contract:	Other Product I		zure/Forfeiture	Name Cha		☐Child Support
	List Product:	□Wr	it of Habeas Corpus—	Protective		Custody or Visitation
	Other Injury or D		e-indictment ner:	of Minori	of Disabilities tv	☐ Gestational Parenting☐ Grandparent Access
		mage.		☐Other:	2	☐Parentage/Paternity
	L					Termination of Parental Rights
Employment	DA duranti undi	Other Civil	Dii-li			Other Parent-Child:
☐ Discrimination ☐ Retaliation			yer Discipline petuate Testimony			
Termination	Competition	□Sec	curities/Stock			
☐ Workers' Compensation ☐ Other Employment:			rtious Interference			
	Intellectual Prop		101.			
24	) 	<u>.</u>				
Tax ☐Tax Appraisal	Probate/Wills/Intes	tata Administration	Probate & Mental Health  tte Administration			
Tax Delinquency		nt Administration		Guardianship—Minor		
Other Tax		ndependent Administration Other Estate Proceedings		☐ Mental Health ☐ Other:		
	Other Estate I	roceedings	L	_Otner:		=
3. Indicate procedure or remedy	y, if applicable <i>(may s</i>	elect more than 1):				
Appeal from Municipal or Justice Court		Declaratory Judgment		Prejudgment Remedy		
□Arbitration-related □Attachment		☐ Garnishment ☐ Interpleader		☐ Protective Order ☐ Receiver		
☐Bill of Review		License		Sequestration		
Certiorari		Mandamus		Temporary Restraining Order/Injunction		
Class Action		☐Post-judgment		Turnover		