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MADISON COUNTY, ILLINOIS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 5, 2014

PRESS RELEASE

Edwardsville— A Madison County Grand Jury has indicted an Alton police officer on Official Misconduct charges in connection with the destruction of evidence that was uncovered this past summer.

On July 23rd, 2014, it was brought to the attention of the Madison County State's Attorney's Office that items of evidence from pending criminal cases had been improperly disposed of by the Alton Police Department evidence officer, Jonathan K. Forrler (d.o.b. 12/1/76) dating back to 2013. At the time, State's Attorney Tom Gibbons reached out to U.S. Attorney Steve Wigginton, the Illinois State Police and the FBI to assist with an investigation.

As the investigation progressed, the State's Attorney's Office filed notice in 130 criminal cases, advising defendants and their attorneys of the destruction of evidence in their case(s). During the investigation, it was discovered that Officer Forrler destroyed forensic evidence in a misdemeanor sexual abuse case that was still pending at the time. This was prohibited by law. Following the conclusion of the investigation, prosecutors presented the evidence to the Grand Jury who returned an indictment against Officer Forrler yesterday.

Forrler faces one count of Official Misconduct, a Class 3 felony. If convicted, the charge carries a penalty ranging from probation up to 2-5 years in prison. His bond was set at \$20,000 by Circuit Judge Richard Tognarelli.

At the time the issue was discovered and notices filed with the Madison County Circuit Court, State's Attorney Gibbons stated that "as the chief law enforcement officer for Madison County, it is my constitutional and ethical obligation to ensure that justice and fairness are always given the highest priority and guarantee in our criminal justice system, and in this matter, that begins by giving criminal defendants full and fair disclosure of the destruction of evidence in their cases." He reiterated his stance following yesterday's indictment and confirmed that if any other instances of evidence destruction is uncovered, notices will be filed with the court immediately.

State's Attorney Gibbons thanked his First Assistant Jennifer Vucich who coordinated the investigation for his office in conjunction with the Illinois State Police, the U.S. Attorney's Office, the FBI, Mayor Brant Walker and the Alton Police Department. "Everyone was supportive and worked together to fully investigate and resolve this serious matter."

This charge, as well as the statements made herein, is based upon probable cause. The defendant is presumed innocent unless proven guilty.

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