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*****MEDIA ALERT*****

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FATHER OF INFANT SEVERELY WOUNDED BY RATS **FOUND GUILTY AS CHARGED**

Evansville, IN – Prosecutor Diana Moers announces that on September 13, 2024, David Anthony Schonabaum was found guilty of 3 felonies related to the neglect and endangerment of his children - the lead charge being a Level 3 Felony for Neglect Resulting in Serious Bodily Injury. The Honorable Judge Robert J. Pigman of the Vanderburgh County Superior Court presided.

On September 13, 2023, David Schonabaum called 911 from his house located at 1606 S. Linwood Ave stating he had found his infant son in his bassinet covered in blood. It was made clear to first responders that there was a rat infestation in the house. The 6-month-old baby was found in his bassinet in a pool of blood with over 50 bites to his body including his face and extremities. The infant's right hand suffered the most traumatic injuries with all four fingers and the thumb missing flesh and exposing the fingertip bones.

Evidence revealed that the Department of Child Services had already been providing services to the home to address the safety concerns associated with the conditions of the house. A third-party provider had also been assisting the family. A representative from that company revealed that, despite their assistance, any progress in the conditions of the house was fleeting. The provider made clear to David Schonabaum that his participation was necessary in providing the children with a safe house to live in, but the problems that needed addressed were never resolved. In addition to assistance from service providers, the Defendant was provided with several, re-usable rat traps.

Three children in the home had been bitten by rats prior to the injuries the 6-month-old had suffered. Photographs of the house on September 13, 2023, revealed the home in a deplorable, unlivable condition. A medical professional testified at the trial to the severity of the infant's injuries, reporting the infant child nearly died from blood loss. This baby now faces permanent injuries from this incident.

The State argued that in forcing the three young children to live in the hazardous conditions at 1606 S. Linwood, David Schonabaum placed these children in a situation which endangered their health and caused the serious bodily injury of his baby.

The State presented several expert witness testimonies, the Defendant's 911 call, and photo evidence to the jury to support the charges against the Defendant. The jury returned a swift verdict of guilty on all 3 counts, as to each of the young victims.

Prosecutor Moers commented: "Today, David Schonabaum was found guilty as charged by a jury including the lead charge of Neglect of a Dependent Causing Serious Bodily Injury which is a Level 3 Felony that carries a potential maximum sentence of 16 years. The victim in this case was a 6-month-old baby who suffered horrific rat bites to his entire body while lying in a bassinet in his home - which permanently disfigured him. The home he was forced to live in with his young siblings was overrun by rats and bugs, and the photos of the home show it full of trash and rat feces. This baby lived in an absolute house of horrors along with his siblings and pet dog.

This case is horrific, and we will live with the images of this baby forever. It is completely shocking to the conscious that anyone would live in these conditions, much less allow their children, baby, and animals to live among absolute filth when they cannot help themselves. It is also unimaginable how a rat was able to do such damage to this infant before his father called for help. We will be asking that his sentence is appropriately harsh as this behavior is not okay. This Defendant was offered every community resource and would not cooperate - as a result, this baby will suffer for a lifetime.

I commend the Evansville Police Department detectives and the paramedics who arrived on scene and most definitely saved this baby's life. In particular, Paramedic Tim Belofsky testified that he self-dispatched to the scene as a supervisor. The 911 call which came in from the father severely downplayed the dire scene at home, so Belofsky's presence was not required, but luckily Tim Belofsky responded on his own intuition and was able to provide the level of care needed to save the baby's life.

We look forward to the sentencing date in this case and will hold nothing back when asking the court to weigh the aggravating factors of this case which justify the highest possible sentence."

Prosecutor Moers extends a special thank you to her Deputy Prosecutor Ian Blair with assistance from Deputy Prosecutor Jessica Berry who thoroughly prepared this case for trial and ensured justice was brought for the young victims. Prosecutor Office Victim Advocate Lisa Deutsch played a critical role for the family during the litigation process.

Prosecutor Moers also thanks all the law enforcement officers who responded to and investigated this case including Officer R. Green, Officer C. Thomas, Officer G. Hosterman, Officers J. Beard, Officer D. Vonderscher, Officer J. Helm, and former Officer J. Spencer. Finally, Prosecutor Moers thanks her legal and investigations staff including Jessica Pollock, Tony Carden, Morgan Richardville, Kiersten Butler, and Jennifer Savage for unwavering dedication to prepare for smooth and successful trials.

Sentencing is scheduled for October 2, 2024, in front of the Honorable Judge Robert J. Pigman of the Vanderburgh County Superior Court.

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