

## FormanWatkins Associate Helps Secure Compensation for Wrongful Conviction in Pro Bono Matter

Through the dedicated efforts of pro bono co-counsel, including FormanWatkins New Orleans office Associate Taylor Delrie Waxley, and a partnership with the Innocence Project New Orleans (IPNO), a significant ruling was achieved when Jarvis Ballard, who was wrongfully convicted at the age of 18, was declared factually innocent and awarded compensation for his 23 years, 6 months, and 25 days of wrongful incarceration.

Ballard was exonerated on August 2, 2021. However, to secure compensation for the years lost, a rigorous process under Louisiana law required proving his "factual innocence." Over the course of more than a year, the legal team prepared and presented their case, culminating in a pivotal contradictory hearing.

The petition, filed under La. R.S. 15:572.8, demanded a thorough examination of the evidence to establish Ballard's innocence. The successful outcome not only grants him compensation but also restores his dignity and acknowledges the profound wrongs he endured—the Court concluded in its Reasons for Judgment:

"Mistakes happen. Mistakes happen by lawyers. Mistakes happen by witnesses. Mistakes happen by Courts. Mistakes happen by other legal actors within our system of justice. The *injustice* would be for a system which did not and/or does not recognize that people, no matter how passionate-are imperfect and make mistakes. Legal errors occurred in this case which deprived Jarvis Ballard in excess of twenty-three years of freedom and opportunity. He began the hearing before this Court on April 22, 2024 *actually innocent*. He has now come before this Court and established his claim of *factual innocence*."