In ***Verdell Carmen Hamlet v. State of Arizona*** **(No. 2 CA-SA 2025-0062)**, decided on December 9, 2025, the Arizona Court of Appeals, Division Two, ordered the **complete disqualification of the Gila County Attorney's Office (GCAO)** from prosecuting a criminal case against petitioner Verdell Hamlet. [1, 2]

The court ruled that the office's involvement created a severe appearance of impropriety that threatened public faith in the neutrality of the justice system. [1, 2]

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1. Background and the Conflict

The case originated in Globe, Arizona, involving Hamlet and a local judge, Perlman. Gila County Attorney Bradley Beauchamp had a close personal relationship with Perlman, and body camera footage* showed Perlman suggesting Beauchamp would pursue allegations because of their connection. After initially pursuing a misdemeanor, the GCAO escalated the matter to a felony aggravated assault charge. Due to these relationships, all local Gila County judges recused themselves and reassigned the case to an outside judge. [1, 2, 3]

2. The Legal Battle Over Disqualification

Hamlet sought to vicariously disqualify the entire Gila County Attorney's Office, though the GCAO resisted by implementing a "conflict wall" to shield Beauchamp, assigning deputies from Payson instead. When the superior court denied the motion to disqualify the office, Hamlet petitioned the Arizona Court of Appeals. [1, 2]

3. The Court of Appeals Ruling

The Court of Appeals reversed the lower court under the framework of ***Gomez v. Superior Court***, emphasizing the appearance of impropriety. The appellate court ruled that the trial court failed to properly evaluate public suspicion based on the totality of the undisputed facts. Given that Beauchamp remained the elected head of the office and an outside county could easily take over without conflict, public trust outweighed any administrative benefit of keeping GCAO on the case. [1, 2, 3]

Verdict

The GCAO was vicariously disqualified, and the prosecution was ordered to transfer to an independent outside agency to preserve public confidence. [1, 2, 3, 4]

**In body camera footage from the investigation of a physical altercation involving then-city magistrate John Perlman, Perlman informed a deputy he was a local judge and chuckled that Gila County Attorney Bradley Beauchamp "will want to do something with the allegations because it's me". This recorded expectation of preferential treatment contributed to the Arizona Court of Appeals ordering the complete vicarious disqualification of the entire Gila County Attorney's Office from prosecuting defendant Verdell Hamlet. Read the full opinion at Justia Law*

Key Findings and Verbatim Language from *Hamlet v. State*

1. Complete Operational Control Piercing "Screening" or Subordinate Insulation

Beauchamp argues that line prosecutors or subordinate deputies made independent charging decisions regarding the Pettitt case. The Court of Appeals directly rejected that defense regarding GCAO operations:

Court Language (¶5, ¶20):
"Bradley Beauchamp is the Gila County Attorney. As such, he 'is responsible for everything that occurs in' the GCAO... This includes exercising the authority to determine whether, and against whom, to bring criminal charges."
"...here, Beauchamp 'has complete political and operational control' over the GCAO. As such, his influence extends to individual prosecutors assigned to the case even if Beauchamp does not make direct decisions on the case."

Monell policymaker liability under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 - Beauchamp cannot claim that a subordinate deputy acted independently; the court has already established that his operational authority and personal influence govern all charging determinations across the GCAO.

2. Disregard of Official Representations to the Court

A recurring issue in retaliatory prosecution claims is credibility—specifically, whether the prosecutor's stated reasons for their actions match reality. The appellate court found that Beauchamp participated in prosecutions while his office **falsely** avowed to the judiciary that he was completely uninvolved:

Court Language (¶17):
"Beauchamp admitted that, in flat contradiction of his office's written representations to the superior court before the hearing, he had participated in the prosecution by monitoring the case, by responding to community members' inquiries about the status of the case, and by attending a conversation between Collins and Perlman concerning a possible plea offer..."

Beauchamp asserts a neutral, lawful justification for pursuing charges against Pettitt, however, the finding in *Hamlet* that GCAO's formal written representations regarding Beauchamp's non-involvement were contradicted by his own testimony.

3. Ineffective Screening and Personal Interference in Plea Discussions

Pettitt alleges that criminal dismissals were leveraged to demand school-related speech waivers and civil liability releases. In *Hamlet*, the court highlighted that Beauchamp personally inserted himself into plea negotiations despite supposed conflict screens:

Court Language (¶21):
"Further, the undisputed record indicates that the GCAO never actively screened Beauchamp from the case... Beauchamp also testified that he had been present during a conversation between Collins and Perlman regarding the possibility of offering a plea agreement to Hamlet... These facts all weigh in favor of finding that Beauchamp has not been meaningfully screened from the prosecution, notwithstanding the GCAO's avowals to the contrary."

This establishes Beauchamp's personal habit, pattern, and practice (FRE 406) of directly meddling in plea terms and case resolutions to benefit insiders, rather than adhering to established institutional screens.

4. Disproportionate Charging and Retaliatory Escalation

In the Pettitt matter, minor school disputes escalated into formal criminal proceedings. The Court of Appeals recognized a similar pattern of disproportionate charging decisions emerging from GCAO under Beauchamp's supervision:

Court Language (¶24–¶25):
"Hamlet has offered plausible reasons to believe that the GCAO's continued involvement harms his legal prospects... He has suggested in his pleadings below, and before this court, that his case has already been prosecuted far more aggressively than one would expect given the underlying facts... Hamlet does provide a non-trivial basis for contending he has already suffered actual prejudice: prejudice arising from the GCAO's discretionary decision first to prosecute him at all and then to elevate his charge from a misdemeanor to felony assault."

Elevating charges or pursuing unmerited prosecutions is a known tactic employed by GCAO against individuals who cross county insiders.

5. Perlman's Crime-Scene Statement

The body-worn camera statement made by Judge Perlman captures the operational culture of the Gila County Attorney's Office:

> **Court Language (¶4, ¶17 n.2):**
> *"Body cam footage shows Perlman, before the citation was issued to Hamlet, telling a sheriff's deputy he was a local judge and then stating, with a chuckle: 'Brad will want to do something with [the allegations] because it's me.' ... This would raise obvious questions to any juror, and any member of the public in attendance, whether the prosecution of Hamlet by the GCAO might have involved such favoritism."*

Under Federal Rule of Evidence 803(3) and Rule 404(b), this is evidence of community reliance on Beauchamp's willingness to use prosecutorial power on behalf of local government figures (Judge Perlman, Principal Lineberry and Superintendent Dorathy).