

NEWS & INSIGHTS

LIGHTFOOT SECURES DISMISSAL FOR DEFAMATION CASE AGAINST WOLFF BROADCASTING COMPANY

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Lightfoot, Franklin & White LLC partners **JT Thompson, Jonathan R. Little** and associate **Gabriel D. Dowdell** secured the complete dismissal of a defamation case against Wolff Broadcasting Company.

The plaintiff, a police officer in Conecuh County, Alabama, brought the defamation claim against Wolff Broadcasting and former city councilman Luther James Upton, who made statements about the police officer while on air at Wolff Broadcasting Company in May of 2021 after the plaintiff arrested Rudolph for drunk driving in November of 2020.

Lightfoot represented Wolff Broadcasting in the case, filing a motion to dismiss on the grounds that the plaintiff had not met the three basic requirements for a defamation claim. The team also referenced *Bell v. Smith*, 281 So. 3d 1247 (Ala. 2019)— a case argued by Thompson and Little—in asserting that the judge could consider the sufficiency of the plaintiff's grounds prior to reaching summary judgment. The judge agreed with Lightfoot's rationale and dismissed the suit in its entirety.

True to Lightfoot's approach of empowering associates with ample hands-on experience, Dowdell took the lead in this case. He drafted the Rule 12 motion to dismiss and led oral arguments before the court.

Thompson represents clients in several industries involving a broad array of cases. He regularly defends doctors in medical malpractice matters and manufacturers in product liability cases. Thompson has tried many cases to defense verdicts in both areas of practice. He also represents companies in general business litigation and serves as trusted counsel to media companies in First Amendment and defamation cases.

Little maintains a varied litigation practice, which includes representing media and communications companies, journalists and broadcasters in defamation and First Amendment matters. He also routinely defends companies in product liability, fire and personal injury litigation, and represents clients in commercial and toxic tort litigation. In addition, Little has secured appellate victories for his clients at the Alabama Court of Civil Appeals, the Alabama Supreme Court and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit.

Dowdell counsels clients in commercial litigation, intellectual property, and environmental and toxic torts disputes. He began his practice working on commercial litigation and consumer protection cases for an international law firm and applied that experience to his practice at Lightfoot.