

Man Released On \$500 Cash Bond After Being Picked Up Four Times For OWI In Three Days, Eventually Involved In Wrong Way I-41 Crash By Mark Belling, WISN-AM

The longtime district attorney of Winnebago County personally appeared in court to recommend a mere \$500 cash bond for an Oshkosh man who, after being released, was involved in a horrific wrong way crash on I-41 in Fond du Lac County.

The Winnebago DA, Christian Gossett, was in court October 20 of last year when the low cash bail was set for Gabriel Estevan Gonzalez, then 33, who was facing narcotics charges. Gossett, in an interview in 2019 with the UW-Oshkosh Advance Titan newspaper, strongly criticized incarcerating and said he does whatever he can to avoid sending people to jail. Hours after Gonzalez was released, he was picked up multiple times on suspicion of OWI, only to be repeatedly released.

On October 26 of last year, six days after his Winnebago County bond hearing, Gonzalez was arrested in connection with a wrong way crash on I-41 in nearby Fond du Lac County. A woman in another car sustained serious injuries. She survived. According to the criminal complaint, Gonzalez was cited for OWI twice in the same day on October 14 of last year, and twice again on October 17. It was after his final arrest that he was charged with narcotics possession. That was the case that landed him in front of a court commissioner for the bail hearing. Online court records indicate Winnebago Court Commissioner Bryan Keberlein set bail at \$500 and that DA Gossett was the prosecutor in the case.

Gonzalez was sentenced last week in Fond du Lac County in connection with the head-on crash there. All charges were dismissed except "first degree recklessly endangering safety by use of a dangerous weapon."

Winnebago County's Gossett isn't the only DA showing leniency toward Gonzalez. Fond du Lac County DA Eric Toney's office was also less than tough with him.

Gonzalez was sentenced to two years in prison with five years supervision after that. The sentence was the result of a plea bargain cut by Gonzalez' lawyer and the Fond du Lac County District Attorney's office. The Fond du Lac DA, Toney, is a Republican candidate for Wisconsin attorney general. His assistant who handled the case, Douglas Edelstein, would not answer my questions about why such a soft sentence was agreed to for Gonzalez despite his alleged OWI binge.

The criminal complaint quotes Gonzalez as saying his drug of choice is heroin and that he bought a gram of it in the days leading up to his numerous driving incidents.

It's taking officials in Oshkosh a long time to clean up Gonzalez other cases. He was only charged this past August for one of his 2020 OWI cases.

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The Winnebago County DA, Gossett, has not responded to my requests for comment.