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Attorney wants to consolidate two trials for Ricky Headley

Sheriff charged in two counties on felony drug possession

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FRANKLIN — Facing trials on prescription drug charges in Davidson County and official misconduct charges here, Williamson County Sheriff Ricky Headley has asked for one trial instead of two.

On Wednesday, Headley's attorney, David Raybin, filed motions in both counties to consolidate 33 indictments in Davidson County with four indictments in Williamson County. Raybin said he's not trying to pick a judge or venue. He said Headley and the state would save money by paying for only one trial instead of two.

"The main thing is the expense of this," Raybin said. "A trial is expensive and time consuming. Why double the effort for judges, witnesses, Mr. Headley and the attorneys when there could be one trial?"

Raybin said the cases in Davidson and Williamson counties are one and the same. He's asked for an evidentiary hearing to prove his point. Raybin said the cases sprung from the same investigation and involve the same witnesses.

There is some strategy to having only one trial.

"If there's a trial and he's acquitted, I don't want to expose my defense and have (prosecutors) come at me again," Raybin said.

Headley, who makes more than \$104,750 a year, is scheduled to go to trial in Williamson County on July 14. No trial date has been set in Davidson County.

A look at the charges

The sheriff is accused of unlawfully obtaining pills from Brooks Pharmacy in Nashville. He was arrested Jan. 31 after visiting the pharmacy. The official misconduct charges in Williamson County stem from allegations that Headley was in uniform and driving a county-owned vehicle to pick up illegally diverted pain medication. Investigators said his personal secretary, Michele Corley, also placed orders and picked up pills for the sheriff.

Prescription labels and logs at the pharmacy indicate that Headley obtained at least 1,900 hydrocodone pills between October 2006 and January 2007, according to the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation. Headley told TBI agents that he was taking the medication and not giving it to anyone else. Investigators said the sheriff also received the muscle relaxant Soma illegally.

Headley told TBI agents that he suffered from back pain, caused by a bulging disc, and had been prescribed medication by a physician.

According to the TBI, Headley was introduced to pharmacist George Brooks in 2006 and told that Brooks was someone with a lot of friends who could help in his re-election. Headley won reelection in 2006. His current term as sheriff expires in 2010.

Headley went to Brooks to have legal prescriptions filled, but as his addiction to painkillers became more severe, Brooks would give him pills prior to the presentation of a prescription, Raybin wrote. Brooks eventually gave Headley pills without prescriptions.

Headley did not use his position as the county's chief law enforcement officer to get prescription medication, Raybin wrote. "He did, however, come to the pharmacy on occasion wearing his uniform and driving the unmarked sheriff car."