

Williamson County sheriff resigns, won't serve jail time

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Embattled Williamson County Sheriff Ricky Headley resigned his post yesterday after he accepted a plea deal that will keep him out of jail on drug charges.

The Williamson County District Attorney's office, in conjunction with Davidson County's DA, agreed to offer the sheriff a suspended five-year sentence — three years supervised probation, two years unsupervised — with the agreement that he would enter a drug and alcohol treatment program and not run for any public office.

The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation and Metro Police arrested Headley over a year ago following a two-year drug sting operation. He was faced with felony charges of prescription drug fraud, which were dropped by the Davidson County DA's office as part of yesterday's plea deal.

Sheriff offers no comment

Headley, 44, would not comment following the hearing in a Williamson County Court, rather he referred questions to his attorney David Raybin.

"Everybody agreed that this was the thing to do and it also seemed reasonable to bring closure to this terrible personal tragedy for this man and his family," Raybin said.

Raybin painted the sheriff as a man afflicted with addiction to painkillers following a back injury that led to his subsequent arrest Jan. 31, 2007, on charges he bought the drugs without a prescription in Nashville.



"The medication was originally prescribed by physicians," Raybin said. "He became addicted to the pain medication like many other people do in our state."

Former Williamson County Sheriff Ricky Headley (center), Headley's wife (left) and his attorney David Raybin talk to the media after a judge accepted his plea deal in a prescription drug scandal. Headley resigned and will not face jail time.

Attorneys in Davidson and Williamson counties said getting Headley out of office was their top priority in contemplating this plea deal. "The objective of [the DA] was to see to it that this runaway train comes to a screeching halt," said Derek Smith, Williamson County Deputy District Attorney. "We had to remove the sheriff from office. People in the county, I think, are embarrassed by the situation, and we had to respond to that."

Simple possession

Attorneys confirmed that Headley was not, in fact, selling the medication he had obtained from the pharmacy. Subsequently, the sheriff pleaded guilty yesterday to four counts of simple possession in Davidson County and one count of conspiracy to commit official misconduct in Williamson County.