

## THE BUTTON LAW FIRM

## HOT-BUTTON ISSUES

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## I MADE IT THROUGH JURY DUTY!

## A Lawyer's Tips and Takeaways on the Process

A few years ago, my dad sat on the jury of a capital murder case at the Denton County Courthouse. It was a severe and difficult trial that took about five weeks in court to resolve. Not only was my dad there for every day of that trial, but he also wound up leading the jury!

It was no small task. My dad was a business owner and had to make significant adjustments to his schedule to sit on the jury. It was frustrating, inconvenient, and disruptive. Still, he was happy to make the sacrifice for the greater good.

I was staying with my parents at the time because I was trying a case in the same courthouse, and one night, my dad told me how gratifying jury work was. That conversation stuck with me, and it was one of the first things I thought about when I opened my own jury duty summons this March. (Yes, lawyers can be called for jury service, too!)

As a trial lawyer, I already spend a lot of time at the Dallas County Courthouse and have seen firsthand how the jury system brings justice, closure, and accountability to families. But I'm usually on the other side of the jury box. Going in as a juror was a totally different experience, and — no surprise — it was a long, difficult day from the minute I stepped into the courthouse.

First, I had to fill out a questionnaire I must have missed when registering online. Then, I shuffled from room to room with my fellow jurors. After hours without snacks, breaks, or opportunities to take phone calls, we finally made it to jury selection. The process went well into the lunch hour, leaving us confused, sleepy, and hungry.

Ultimately, I wasn't selected to serve on the jury — but I came away with several tips and takeaways. I hope you'll think about these things next time you're called for jury duty.

**JURY DUTY SURVIVAL TIPS**

- 1. Plan to arrive early.** Budget time to wander the building until you find the right room and complete anything you missed during online registration.

- 2. Research your parking options before you go.** Many courthouses offer discounted rates for jurors at particular lots. Visit the courthouse's website to determine which lots are which, or take an Uber to avoid the hassle (that's what I did).
- 3. Bring water and plenty of snacks.** Many courthouses don't provide these, so it's best to bring your own, especially if you need to eat regularly. You can fill up your water bottle inside the courthouse.

**MY TWO BIGGEST TAKEAWAYS**

- 1. You must hire a lawyer if you have a serious case and genuinely want justice.** During my jury selection, I noticed the defendant had a lawyer, but the plaintiff didn't — and that put them at a clear disadvantage. They didn't know the rules of evidence or understand how to ask the right questions. Not every case requires a lawyer (we often give people with fender benders the resources to resolve them alone), but if you're hit by a drunk driver, crushed by an 18-wheeler, or struggling with a daycare case, representing yourself puts you at a disadvantage.
- 2. Our justice system relies on the community to hold people accountable, and it's gratifying to be a part of that.** Like my dad, I didn't mind rearranging my schedule for jury duty. Sure, it was a long and inconvenient day, but being considered as a juror was highly gratifying. It was a pleasure to be part of a collective, community-powered movement toward justice.

I would have been proud to serve on a Dallas jury. Hopefully, I'll get the chance one day!

*-Russell Button*

# FIND AN ALLERGY-SAFE DAYCARE

SAVE YOUR CHILD FROM A DEADLY REACTION

Did you know that, on average, every single daycare classroom in the U.S. has at least two children with food allergies? That means at any moment, one of those kids could suffer from hives, nausea, anaphylactic shock, or another scary reaction at snack time.

If your child has food allergies, you know just how dangerous these reactions are. Everyday foods like peanuts, milk, eggs, wheat, soy, shellfish, tree nuts, and sesame can be deadly! So, how can you protect your child when they're not at home?

## HOW TO CHOOSE AN ALLERGY-SAFE DAYCARE

According to Food Allergy Research and Education (FARE), over 60% of allergic reactions in schools happen in daycare and preschool facilities. That's why it's incredibly important to choose an allergy-safe daycare. Responsible daycares should:

1. Ask for a physician-completed form that outlines your child's allergies.
2. Ask your permission before introducing your child to new foods.
3. Notify you if another kid in your child's class has a serious allergy so you can avoid packing a lunch or snack with their allergen.

4. Label and store food properly to avoid cross-contamination with allergens.
5. Properly train its staff to respond to allergic reactions.
6. Have written policies and procedures surrounding allergic reactions. (In Texas, daycares must have emergency plans for every child with doctor-diagnosed food allergies.)

Check all six of those requirements before enrolling your child in a new daycare.

## WHAT TO DO AFTER AN ALLERGIC REACTION

If your child experiences an allergic reaction at daycare because of a sloppy or neglectful caregiver, get them medical help immediately. Then, report the incident to the state, document what happened, and call our team of experienced daycare lawyers for help at **214-888-2216**. We regularly step up to fight for kids seriously injured, traumatized, or killed by allergic reactions at daycare, and we'll do the same for you.

If you have a client, friend, or family member whose young child has serious allergies, please share this article with them. May is Allergy Awareness Month, and the more parents know about preventing and reacting to allergy attacks at daycare, the better!

## MEET OUR NEW TEAM MEMBER, SARAH NAVA

### She's a Writer, Cat Mom, and Lifelong Learner

It's hard to believe how quickly our BLF team is growing! We recently welcomed another new team member to our family: Sarah Nava, our ambitious administrative assistant.

One of our favorite things about Sarah is her endless desire to learn. She spends every day at work challenging herself to pick up more tasks from Elizabeth and our other operations team members, brainstorm ideas for our marketing department, and soaking up information about our clients and how our firm operates. If you ever get a birthday card, thank-you card, or congratulations card from us, Sarah is the one who sent it!



Education is one of our team's core values, so we really love Sarah's attitude. In her interview, she told us her yearning to learn

new things inspired her to leave her job as an administrative assistant at a Dallas private school and join our team.

"During my time at Dallas Baptist University [where she earned her bachelor's in business studies], I had a mentor who always encouraged me to learn as much as possible.

They said it was good to learn all varieties of work. So, when I got to my cap at my previous job and learned everything I could, I decided it was time to learn something new," Sarah says.

She leaped out of her comfort zone and into law, and she's thriving! Perhaps unsurprisingly, her passion for learning extends beyond the office, too. When

Sarah isn't working, she's usually curled up on the couch with her cat, Reaper, at her side and a book or laptop open on her lap.



Sarah inhales business books, fantasy titles, and romance novels, and loves to write stories and play video games in her spare time. (If you're an Overwatch fan, you have guessed where Reaper got her name!) Creating new worlds with fiction is her favorite way to escape reality.

"I really like activating my imagination to think about and create stories people might like, just as I've liked so many stories growing up," she says. "When I retire from working, my big dream is to become a novelist."

Next time you get a thank-you card from BLF, remember that a future bestselling author sent it!



# DRUGGED AT DAYCARE?

## This Abuse Is More Common Than You Think

How do you deal with a fussy child who won't quiet down for nap time? Most parents offer cuddles or give their kids a quiet activity to do until they doze off. That's how daycares should deal with nap time, too, but unfortunately, it doesn't always happen. We've seen caregivers resort to much scarier methods — like drugging young kids until they pass out.

That strategy sounds like something out of a horror movie, but it's true. Our firm recently represented a sweet two-year-old girl (we'll call her Mackenzie) who had trouble calming

down for her nap at daycare. When her caregivers saw her crying, they decided not to comfort or redirect her as the state of Texas requires. Instead, *they fed her Benadryl to make her fall asleep.*

The daycare did this two days in a row, and when Mackenzie's mom found out, she was horrified! She pulled Mackenzie from the daycare and called our team for help. We dug into the facility's history and discovered a long list of violations and open investigations into abuse and neglect. The caregivers were reportedly unsupervised, unqualified, and improperly trained. We even found other complaints from parents claiming daycare staff had medicated, spanked, or hurt their children.

Thankfully, the state of Texas quickly shut down that terrible daycare! But it was too late for Mackenzie and her family.

Mackenzie's mom was so traumatized by her daughter's experience that she didn't feel safe leaving her with another daycare. Instead, she quit her job and became a stay-at-home mom, turning her life and income upside-down.

That wasn't fair for her or her family, so our team contacted the shuttered daycare's insurance company for justice. Ultimately, we secured a settlement to help Mackenzie and her mom get back on their feet.

If you know someone whose child has been drugged at daycare, make sure they don't brush off the impact of a single Benadryl pill. It could be a sign that things are deeply wrong at the daycare. By reporting the abuse to the state and a firm like ours, they could help shut down the daycare and get the compensation their child deserves.

# BLF HIGHLIGHT REEL



## CLIENT REVIEW

***“A special thank-you to the entire staff for all your help during this traumatic period for us. I know it's your job, but it's my life, and I feel you went above and beyond. I just want to express my appreciation. If you want a law firm that treats you not only like a valued client but family, this is the firm for you.”***

*-Ashley Gray*

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## KEEP YOUR KIDS SAFE FROM HUMAN TRAFFICKING

### Act on These 2 Expert Tips

During his 30 years in Texas law enforcement, investigator Jeremy Thomas saw countless terrible things. He specialized in digital forensics, human trafficking, and internet crimes against children — so he knows all the dangers Texas kids face and how to prevent them.

“When people hear about human trafficking, they think about children being abducted at the mall or the park playing. They don’t realize that in the modern day, with the technology we have, it’s happening [at home],” Jeremy says.

He adds, “The grooming process can start while your child is sitting next to you on the couch with a random stranger talking to them on their cellphone. I’ve worked a lot of cases with younger girls around 13. They’re in that awkward stage, with someone flashing money and telling them how pretty they are. It’s a really easy catch for predators to get those kids out of the house.”

Jeremy spent decades living the real-life version of “To Catch a Predator.” His team catfished criminals, chased down online sexual assault material (formerly called child pornography), and

rescued women bought and sold by human traffickers. With that experience in mind, these are his tips for parents who want to keep their kids safe.

1. Stay engaged in your child's life, including their interests, hobbies, and hangouts online.
2. Check your child's smartphone, laptop, tablet, and other devices randomly and consistently.

These tips apply to both young kids and teens. You may get some pushback from your child when you check their devices — many kids feel it’s an invasion of privacy — but Jeremy recommends gently persisting.

“Parents should push the narrative that it’s not you [the child] that we don’t trust; it’s the rest of the world we don’t trust,” he says. “Say, ‘I know you’re mad about it, and we won’t embarrass you or read messages with your friends, but we do need to check.’”

To get involved in the fight against human trafficking, consider donating to a nonprofit working with the Human Trafficking Rescue Alliance or attending a local Human Trafficking Awareness Day event on Jan. 11, 2024.

Jeremy Thomas with his family.

