

By Mitch Mitchell

mitchmitchell@star-telegram.com

MARCH 06, 2015 06:26 PM, UPDATED MARCH 08, 2015 02:48 PM



John Hubbard, who has muscular dystrophy and lost his job as an investigator with the Tarrant County district attorney's office, shows a photo of him working with former prosecutor Christy Jack.

RODGER MALLISON STAR-TELEGRAM

[Karma's a bitch!](#)

TOP ARTICLES

Cook Children's partners with Texas A&M to offer free legal services to patients

Get unlimited digital access for only \$4.99 per month.

CLAIM OFFER

“The new DA did not know me, but she came in talking about making budget cuts in the office,” Hubbard said. “I was an easy cut for her.”

Wilson, a former state district judge, promised changes in the DA’s office, saying during last year’s election campaign that she would trim budgets and staff, create efficiencies and streamline operations.

So far, she has stuck to her plan.

Six top prosecutors from the Shannon administration were told they would not be returning in January. Other employees, some upset by Wilson’s mandate that the staff must work from 7:45 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., quit.

From Oct. 24 to Feb. 23, the district attorney’s office lost 42 full- and part-time employees out of 312, according to information obtained by the *Star-Telegram* through an open-records request and from the office’s [website](#). Among the departed are 26 full-time prosecutors, accounting for about 17 percent of the DA’s staff attorneys.

“It seems as though every decision and cut Wilson makes for the office makes it harder for the employees to do their jobs and further plummets their morale,” Hubbard said. “She is making cuts to make herself look good without regard to the diminishing effectiveness of the office as a whole.”

In December, a week before her inauguration, Wilson said the staffing changes would not delay bringing cases to trial. But some of her critics say they do not see how she can keep that promise.

Presley Darnell, a retired investigator who worked part time under Shannon but was fired by Wilson, said the DA’s office did not pay him for vacations, mileage, healthcare or retirement while he worked.

He predicts that cases once worked by him and his fellow part-timers will now fall through the cracks.

“We were relatively inexpensive for our backgrounds and fields of expertise,” Darnell said.

Wilson has filled some of the openings with other prosecutors who have extensive résumés. She said that she plans to fill all the vacant positions and that her staff will have fewer managing attorneys and more attorneys who carry caseloads.

-
- Three part-time prosecutors and three part-time investigators had their jobs eliminated.
 - Two recently hired prosecutors were fired.
 - At least 15 prosecutors with varying ranges of experience resigned or retired.
 - Three prosecutors who formerly worked in the Shannon administration stepped down to assume judgeships.

“By redesigning the management structure of the office and by trimming the staff we have been able to achieve a more efficient use of the office’s resources while reducing overall operating costs to the taxpayers,” Wilson said. “These changes can only serve to save additional monies as we go forward.”

Those who left — some voluntarily, some not — included high-profile prosecutors such as Sean Colston, Christy Jack, David Lobingier, Leticia Martinez and Jack Strickland.

Lobingier, a former prosecutor in the economic crimes division, said some of the young prosecutors who stayed with Wilson are tentative and worried about their jobs.

“I understand the transition has been difficult,” said Lobingier, who has 41 years’ experience. “There are new rules in place that some people have not found logical. You lose people with those type of credentials and you look at your experience, and it’s not even close. It’s bound to have a disconcerting effect on people who have not been in the business for too long.”

Another campaign promise that Wilson’s critics doubt she can keep is her vow to cut the office’s budget.

“I’ll just say unequivocally no,” said Strickland, a senior attorney in Shannon’s office who was asked not to return in January. “She just can’t do it. Now she’s having a hard time cajoling people to come work for her.”

WORKING PARENTS

Jack, who was elevated to “litigation expert” under Wilson, and Martinez, a senior chief prosecutor, resigned in mid-February.

Both said they left partly because of Wilson’s directive that the staff work from 7:45 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday — without exception — according to correspondence obtained by the *Star-Telegram* through an open-records request.

Jack and Martinez are both working mothers with special-needs children.

Jack wrote that she and other prosecutors often spend 60 or more hours a week on the job. A few minutes lost here and there can typically be made up by coming in early, working through lunch, staying late or working from home, the letter said.

“You stated that your policy of office hours of 7:45 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. would be strictly enforced for all prosecutors with no exceptions,” Jack’s resignation letter

“I also explained to you that just a few minutes of flexibility in the morning for some and in the evening for others could mean everything to a working parent — a sentiment currently echoed throughout the office,” the letter said.

In the same letter, Jack said that she had received no memo outlining the policy changes that Wilson was suggesting and that she was going forward with her resignation.

Wilson told the *Star-Telegram* that the community and law enforcement have responded positively to the new work-hour rules and that extending the evening hours to 5:30 p.m. has made prosecutors and other staffers more accessible to people who don’t get off work until 5 p.m.

“This change has allowed us to become more effective and efficient serving those we work with and on behalf of without any increased burden to the taxpayers,” Wilson said.

Tarrant County's human resources department responded that Wilson is under no obligation to continue that policy.

'CHANGE CAN BE GOOD'

Newly elected officials typically bring in their own supervisory teams, make new hires and change how things run, said Allan Saxe, an associate political science professor at the University of Texas at Arlington.

"She won. That's all there is to it," Saxe said. "No one likes real dramatic change, but it's not too shocking that change takes place. That's why we elect new people to office: to change things, to get some new ideas. Change can be good."

Colston, a Wilson casualty who landed at the Dallas County district attorney's office, said employees working for an elected official understand that they can be fired at any time.

“Anytime you have an administration change, you will have turnover,” Colston said.

When Craig Watkins became Dallas County district attorney in 2007, he fired people and brought in a new supervisory staff, and the county survived, said Lesa Pamplin, an Arlington attorney who supported Wilson in her election.

“Every new administration makes changes,” Pamplin said. “People lose jobs. People were mad at Craig, but they got over it.”

Watkins lost his re-election bid in November.

As Wilson makes changes, Pamplin said, leaving is probably the best option for some.

“The easy solution is to go into private practice, and then you can set your own hours,” Pamplin said. “Being on your own gives you the flexibility to do whatever



 1 of 7

Christy Jack TARRANT COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE *HANDOUT*

PROMOTED CONTENT

by **mgid**

INSURE MY CAR



Homeowners Should Only Pay This Much for Home Insurance

ZESTRADAR



One Simple Method To Keep Your Blood Sugar Below 100

WEEKLYPENNY.COM



1 Cup Of This Daily Burns 12 Lbs Of Fat In A Week! Try Tonight

KETO

 [COMMENTS](#) 



ARLINGTON

Local Spotlight

● OAK FIREWOOD Se

OAK FIREWOOD Seasoned \$260/cord,
\$160/half delivered & stacked 817-
925-9606

● HONEST FENCING!

Arlington detectives said the shooting may have involved people who were participating in a "high risk activity."

KEEP READING →

maintenance. Whether new addition, garage conversions, bathrooms, doors, tape/bed/texturing, painting, electric, plumbing, tile, and/or small handyman work. Accomplished years of satisfied customers on home, rentals, investment properties, and businesses.

- **TILE SERVICE Rab**

TILE SERVICE Rabbit Construction.
Complete Shower Remodeling,
laminate&wood floor 817-366-2820

- **All Phases
Home/Rentals/Remodel**

All Phases home/rentals/ remodel/
repairs, handyman, 25yrs of satisfied
customers. 817-455-1382

HOLIDAY SALE

#ReadLocal



FORT WORTH

Body of man found in Parker County as search continues for killer in North Texas

UPDATED DECEMBER 23, 2020 01:46 PM



FORT WORTH

Fort Worth driver failed to safely change lanes, killed another motorist, lawsuit says

UPDATED DECEMBER 23, 2020 11:46 AM



FORT WORTH

Suspected burglar shot in the leg in west Fort Worth neighborhood, police say

DECEMBER 23, 2020 6:27 AM



CRIME

Keller police arrest, pepper spray man when he films son's arrest over traffic violation

DECEMBER 22, 2020 2:30 PM

Police release a composite image of rape assailant who knocked on Denton woman's door

DECEMBER 22, 2020 10:07 PM

These Maps Are Changing the Way People See the US [↗](#)

BY RANKER

Take Us With You

Real-time updates and all local stories you want right in the palm of your hand.



FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM APP
→

SUBSCRIPTIONS

[Start a Subscription](#)

[Customer Service](#)

[eEdition](#)

[Vacation Hold](#)

[Pay Your Bill](#)

LEARN MORE

[About Us](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Newsletters](#)

COMMENTING POLICY

PRIVACY POLICY

TERMS OF SERVICE