

# Lawnside pays \$195,000 to alleged false arrest victim



by JOHN PAFF  
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In late-January 2009, Lawnside Borough officials and/or their insurance carrier paid a transmission repair shop owner \$195,000 to settle a police false arrest and excessive force claim.

According to the lawsuit, William Rumbas, who owns Barrington Transmissions on White Horse Pike, Barrington, was test driving a customer's car on April 7, 2004 when it broke down in front of an Amoco station in Lawnside. Rumbas and the Amoco station owner pushed the car into the station's parking lot and Rumbas agreed to come back in two or three days to tow the car back to his own shop.

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## Convenience store lawsuit funding

On April 11, 2004, according to the suit and other court papers, Lawnside Police Officers William Roberts and Daniel Battista visited Rumbas in his shop to issue him a summons for abandoning the vehicle.

According to court documents, Roberts demanded to see Rumbas's driver license. Rumbas reportedly gave Roberts his name and inquired why he needed to see his license. Roberts allegedly became enraged by Rumbas' question and screamed "I'm a patrolman. I want to see your driver's license." After Roberts' further demands for Rumbas' driver license resulted in Rumbas asking why he wanted to see it, Roberts allegedly grabbed Rumbas' left hand, pushed him onto the counter and put handcuffs on him. The incident allegedly happened in front of Rumbas' customers. Rumbas was allegedly taken to the police station where he was charged with abandoning a vehicle. Rumbas claimed that he suffered back and wrist injuries due to the arrest.

Rumbase was represented by Alan E. Denenberg, Esq. of Philadelphia.

The settlement agreement and other lawsuit documents are [here](#).

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None of the Rumbas' allegations have been proven or disproven in court. The entry of the settlement agreements does not constitute an admission of wrongdoing by the Borough of Lawnside or any of its employees. All that is known for sure is that Lawnside and its insurer, for whatever reason, decided that they would rather pay the Rumbas family a total of \$195,000 than take the matters to trial. Perhaps Lawnside's decision to settle was done to save further legal expense and the costs of trying what were in fact exaggerated or meritless claims. Or, it's possible that Rumbas' claims were true and Lawnside wanted to avoid being embarrassed at trial. This is the problem when cases settle before trial—it is impossible to know the truth of what really happened.

### ABOUT ME AND WHY I'M POSTING THIS.

I chair the New Jersey Libertarian Party's Open Government Advocacy Project which seeks to increase governmental transparency and accountability, particularly at a local level. As part of my work, I routinely check civil court cases where at least one of the parties is a government agency or official. Most often, these settlement agreements are never revealed to the public. I post them on-line because I believe that civil settlements, regardless of amount, may be of interest to citizens and taxpayers. For more information on the Libertarian Party, go to <http://www.njlp.org>