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Bend courtroom chaos erupts over property case

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Court-watch group is known for courthouse outbursts

By Nina Mehlhaf, KTVZ.COM

A major disruption in a Bend courtroom Friday brought an army of Deschutes County sheriff's deputies and ended with the entire noisy crowd thrown out of the building.

Yelling, name calling and questions of judicial corruption - it was a mess.



Patricia Wishon of La Pine confronts judge, others in courtroom after reading lengthy statement

Only NewsChannel 21 was there for a motions hearing over a La Pine property seizure that started off calmly. But sheriff's deputies knew from the past history of this group, things could soon get out of hand.

"This is the citizen's courthouse people! This is the citizen's courthouse, and they're throwing people out of the courthouse!" yelled Patricia Wishon.

It made for quite a sight on the steps of the Deschutes County Courthouse.

It took more than a dozen sheriff's deputies to slowly escort the La Pine woman and her group of supporters out the front doors.

"These folks are very verbal, and these folks want to make sure they get their point out. And sometimes they do things out of regular function that hinder the ability of the court and cause a disturbance," sheriff's Lt. Kevin Dizney told NewsChannel 21 after it was all over.

But to understand why it started, we have to go back. It began almost normally, with a motions hearing to dismiss a case regarding a piece of La Pine property that Wishon says was stolen from her and auctioned off.

Helping her is Roger Weidner of Portland, a former lawyer and the vice president of Oregon Judicial Watch, a citizen's court-watch group, who travels the state confronting judges he believes are corrupt. After Wishon read her motion aloud for 30 minutes, the judge denied it - and that's when things got out of hand.

Judge Morgan said, "The hearing is over." And immediately Wishon launched into a verbal tirade.

"You will be named also in the document, and anyone that interferes will be named and you will answer!" she yelled at the judge and others in the court.

But when the dozen or so plain clothed deputies started trying to get the whole group to leave the courtroom, Wishon began shouting, "I don't have to leave the courtroom. These are the people's courtrooms! These are the people's courtrooms!"

While disruptions like that are rare, sheriff's deputies were ramped up for this one.

Just Thursday, Weidner was thrown out of the Multnomah County Courthouse in Portland for an outburst over a child custody case. He says he's spent over 300 days in jail for contempt of court.

"Some folks were making some statements that were going out of hand," said Dizney. "And ultimately, we just had to help clear the court and to avoid any further disturbances that would hinder the ability of the court to perform."

Nothing ever got physical at Friday's hearing. But the group says they won't rest until the court system becomes constitutional again.



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