

CHESTERFIELD COUNTY

## Chesterfield Commonwealth's Attorney cited for ethics violation in Lunsford murder trial

*Chesterfield Commonwealth's Attorney Stacey Davenport.*

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CHESTERFIELD, Va. (WRIC) — Chesterfield’s chief prosecutor, Commonwealth’s Attorney Stacey Davenport, has been cited for an ethics violation for statements she made to the media during a trial related to Linda Lunsford’s murder.

The decision, which was published by a subcommittee of the state bar on Tuesday, April 11, centered on a news release and radio promo that were distributed ahead of the trial of John Harvey Howard. Howard was convicted of killing Linda Lunsford in 1996 — a cold case that [took police more than 20 years to solve](#).

Howard, who was 62 at the time of his arrest, died in custody before he could be sentenced.

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Before the trial commenced in 2022, Davenport issued a news release outlining her office’s view of the case and describing the disappearance of Lunsford, whose body, even after Howard’s arrest and conviction, was never recovered.

In the release, Davenport is quoted as saying, “Linda Lunsford was murdered by her former boyfriend and co-worker John Howard on the day-after Christmas in 1996. The brutality of her murder was compounded by the fact her body was never recovered.”

The “brutality” of Lunsford’s murder was described in the news release as “the most heinous, heinous, that word, heinous, that

62°  [SIGN UP](#) 

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There was just one issue — since Lunsford's body was never recovered, no one, except perhaps John Howard, knew how she died.

That month, Howard's defense attorney sought and was ultimately granted a court order barring Davenport from making any further public comments while the trial was ongoing.

"The press releases, the content of them, the overall timing of the recent publicity, all in the Court's mind present a substantial risk of interfering with the fairness of this jury trial," wrote Judge Lynn Brice.

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Davenport reportedly told the state bar committee that she had not intended to interfere with Howard's right to a fair trial, that the release was based on an already-public indictment, and that during jury selection, none of the jurors indicated having seen or read her press release.

Nevertheless, the state bar's committee found that she had violated ethics rules around trial publicity and that her statements had the potential to taint the jury pool.

The committee ultimately decided to issue a public admonition to Davenport, effectively sparing her from any immediate consequences, but ensuring that documentation of the incident would remain in the public record.

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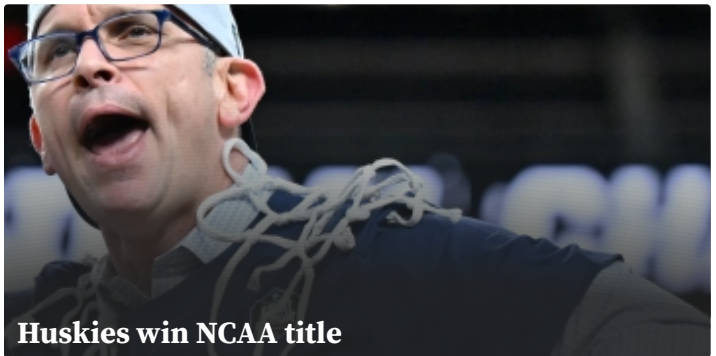


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81°

CLOUDY  
Feels like 81°


Sunrise 03:34 am  
Sunset 04:46 pm

NO ALERTS


CURRENTLY

 PRECIP	--%	 HUMIDITY	42%	 VISIBILITY	10 mi
 WIND	SSE at 9mph	 DEWPOINT	56°	 PRESSURE	29.80 in


EVENTS




Sat, May 06 @7:00pm Sponsored  
**Disney in Concert: "A Dream is a Wish"**




Sun, Apr 16 @1:45pm Sponsored  
**A Nice Indian Boy**



Fri, Apr 21 @6:00pm Sponsored  
**CLUE - Dinner & Show!**



Sun, Apr 16 @11:00am  
**Native Plants & Pollinators**



Sun, Apr 16 @12:00pm

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Sat, Apr 22 @10:00am Sponsored

**Women Align Lifestyle Expo**



Wed, Apr 19 @9:00am Sponsored

**DigitalIRVA**



Wed, Apr 19 @7:00pm Sponsored

**Richmond Film Network Short Film Series: April**



Sun, Apr 16 @12:00am

**What the country has been missing...Sticky Notes: Love'n War**



Sun, Apr 16 @9:30am

**Playing With Light**



Sun, Apr 16 @10:30am

**Birthday Party at The Robins Nature Center**



Sun, Apr 16 @2:00pm

**The Rivals**



Sun, Apr 16 @1:00pm

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