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Wrongly Convicted Man Gets \$7.95 Million Settlement

By REBECCA CATHCART
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LOS ANGELES — A man who spent 24 years imprisoned for a murder he did not commit will receive \$7.95 million from the City of Long Beach after he sued the police there for withholding evidence in his 1980 trial.

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J. Emilio Flores for The New York Times
Thomas Lee Goldstein, shown in June 2004 in Pasadena, Calif., spent 24 years in prison for a crime he did not commit.

The settlement, made public Thursday, is the largest pretrial settlement ever in California for a [wrongful conviction](#) and one of the largest in the country, said Barry Litt, a lawyer for the man, Thomas Lee Goldstein.

In 2004, Mr. Goldstein was freed from prison after the Los Angeles district attorney dismissed all charges against him in the 1979 killing of a Long Beach drug dealer. The move was based on new evidence that the police had coached the only witness in the case by pointing Mr. Goldstein out in a photo spread as a suspect who had failed a polygraph test.

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Lawyers also presented evidence that the police had offered Eddy Fink, a heroin addict and police informant, leniency in a grand theft conviction if he testified against Mr. Goldstein.

At the trial, Mr. Fink told the jury that Mr. Goldstein had confessed to the killing when the two men briefly shared a jail cell. Mr. Fink, who has since died, lied in court when asked if he had made any deal with the police before testifying, Mr. Litt said.

But Monte Machit, the Long Beach deputy attorney who defended the city in the case, said the police had not provided Mr. Fink “with any benefit in exchange for the information he offered.”

“We don’t believe there was any wrongdoing” by city officials, Mr. Machit said. “This is a lot of money, but in light of the potential verdict,” which could have been \$24 million to \$30 million and lawyers’ fees, he said, “we thought it better to get it resolved.”

Mr. Goldstein, 61, said the settlement was the end of a 30-year-long “painful chapter” in his life.

He said he would spend his coming years trying to “rebuild my life, prepare for retirement and help others who have not been as fortunate as I am today.”

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