

## **Jackson man claims abuse in jail in suit over signs -Judge had Phillip Dean held for criticizing court actions**

Tuesday, August 16, 2005

By [David Brewer](#), Huntsville Times Staff Writer

Scottsboro, AL - A Jackson County man says he had to drink out of a toilet because he was denied food and water after Circuit Judge Wallace Haralson had him jailed over his yard signs criticizing the judge.

Phillip Dean of Skyline makes the claim in a suit he filed in federal court Thursday against Haralson and Sheriff Mike Wells, claiming they illegally imprisoned him Aug. 18, 2003, over the signs.

Dean also claims he was held for 26 hours without bond and was not allowed to make phone calls. He says he was made to wear a dirty jail uniform and was "paraded around the courthouse" by a jailer who took him to three courtrooms "for no other reason than to humiliate" him as he "hobbled about shackled for all to see." Haralson and Wells declined to comment Monday.

A year ago, Dean filed an affidavit of claim with the County Commission, seeking more than \$2 million in damages over his claim that his First Amendment right to free speech had been violated.

Dean said Friday he filed the federal lawsuit because he didn't get a response from the county.

"I didn't get any justice from Jackson County," he said. "So I want to see if I can find justice in the federal system."

Dean said a lawyer, whom he declined to name, helped him prepare the suit. But he said he is representing himself unless the matter cannot be settled without a trial.

"If they're not willing to come to some settlement, it will be turned over to an attorney for a jury trial," he said.

Dean says in his suit he was jailed because he made yard signs criticizing Haralson about a custody dispute two years ago between Dean and his ex-wife.

The suit says Wells, the sheriff, told Dean that "Haralson was angry about the signs and he planned to put plaintiff in jail for 30 days with no bond, no visitors and no phone calls to teach plaintiff a lesson."

Haralson said in March 2004 that he had Dean released after about 12 hours and returned his signs.

The message on one of the signs was, "Our court system is a joke."

Haralson said, at the time, the signs "were so derogatory, they couldn't be ignored." He said the Alabama Judicial Inquiry Commission had written him in February 2004 about Dean's complaint, advising him "to be more judicious in the future toward arresting powers."

Dean is seeking unspecified compensatory and punitive damages.