

CLALLAM COUNTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

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King County Man Receives 26 Years in Armed Drug Dealing Case *Clallam County Superior Court Cause No.: 22-1-00367-05*

Clallam County Superior Court Judge Simon Barnhart followed the Clallam County Prosecuting Attorney's Office recommendation and sentenced Nathan Peterson to 312 months (26 years) in prison for four counts of possessing controlled substances with intent to deliver while armed with a firearm, one count of attempting to elude a pursuing police vehicle, one count of unlawful imprisonment, and one count of unlawful possession of a firearm in the second degree. The sentence followed a jury verdict in May after a four-day jury trial.

In November of last year, Peterson got into a high-speed chase with law enforcement after one of his passengers fired multiple shots from the moving car, scaring two men in a nearby car. While attempting to evade police, Peterson reached speeds of roughly 100 miles-per-hour and at one point went the wrong direction on Highway 101 near Carlsborg. One of the backseat passengers repeatedly asked Peterson to let her out of the car, but he refused. Peterson led police several miles into Jefferson County, where police were eventually able to disable his car and arrest him and the front-seat passenger who fired the gun.

The Clallam County Sheriff's Office seized Peterson's car and later searched it pursuant to a search warrant. Deputies Nicholas Canady and Steffen Estep located cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, and roughly 1,000 fentanyl pills inside a backpack in the trunk of the car. Peterson admitted at trial that the backpack and the drugs inside were his. The deputies also found a large number of small baggies, multiple digital scales, several dozen 9mm rounds, and almost \$10,000 in cash in the backpack. Additionally, the deputies located a loaded .22 rifle near the backpack.

"Peterson demonstrated through his actions on November 6, 2022, that he is a significant danger to the community," wrote Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Steve Johnson in recommending a 312-month sentence. In his recommendation, Johnson highlighted the dramatic impact synthetic opioids, including fentanyl, have had on overdose deaths in Clallam County and nationwide. Citing numbers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention showing a tripling of opioid overdose deaths per year from 2013 to 2021, as well as local figures showing a sharp rise in drug overdose deaths in Clallam County, Johnson argued, "These statistics highlight the devastation that the narcotics trade, particularly the synthetic

opioid trade, has wrought both at home and around the country. Peterson contributed to that devastation when he brought what he admitted was several thousand dollars' worth of narcotics, primarily fentanyl, into Clallam County."

Peterson's sentence included a base sentence of 72 months consecutive to four 60-month firearm enhancements for being armed with a firearm while possessing four different controlled substances with the intent to deliver them. In addition to incarceration, Peterson will be on 12 months of community custody following his release. His co-defendant, Christopher Tavita, previously pleaded guilty to two counts of assault in the second degree with a deadly weapon and received a 48-month sentence.

Office Information

The Clallam County Prosecuting Attorney's Office employs over 25 people, including 14 attorneys. Clallam County, which includes Forks, Port Angeles and Sequim, has an approximate population of 78,000.

The Criminal Division represents the state and the county in criminal matters in the Clallam County District and Superior Courts. The Criminal Division is responsible for prosecuting all felonies in Clallam County and all misdemeanors in unincorporated areas of Clallam County as well as the Cities of Port Angeles and Sequim.

The Civil Division acts as the law firm representing the County and its agencies. The Civil Division advises and represents all of the County's elected officials and departments on a myriad of complex legal matters. The range of legal representation provided by this unit is expansive and covers virtually every aspect of civil practice.

The Child Support Division is wholly funded by and represents the Division of Child Support of the State of Washington. The Support Division carries out judicial establishment of paternity and child support, enforcements for failure to pay court-ordered child support, and modifications to existing child support orders. The Support Division also represents the State of Washington in collection actions on parents owing a duty of support.

For more information call:

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