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PRESS RELEASE

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ACLU of Utah sues Daggett County jailers and State corrections officials over pattern of abuse

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Salt Lake City — On May 16, 2018 the American Civil Liberties of Utah Foundation, Inc. (“ACLU of Utah”) filed a lawsuit on behalf of Dustin Porter and Steven Drollette (“Plaintiffs”) seeking damages and injunctive relief for a pattern of severe cruelty against them while they were incarcerated at the Daggett County Jail. In their complaints, the Plaintiffs describe being shocked with a Taser for guards’ entertainment, being attacked by police dogs, being physically assaulted, being threatened with a gun, and being denied medical and mental health care, among other instances of abuse.

Plaintiffs contend that State and County employees and officials were aware of the longstanding pattern of brutality at the jail but failed to take preventative and corrective actions to keep them safe and protect their dignity. As a result, Plaintiffs suffered severe and traumatic injuries.

“Paying your debt to society does not mean your jailers can shock you with a Taser and attack you with dogs only to later call it ‘fun and games,’” said John Mejia, Legal Director for the ACLU of Utah and attorney for the Plaintiffs. “We trust correctional officers and their superiors to ensure the welfare and safety of inmates who are in their custody. This litigation aims to hold employees and their

superiors, at the County and State levels, accountable for patterns of serious abuse at the Daggett County Jail.”

“The State and the County need to answer for what they did to me and the others,” said plaintiff Dustin Porter. “I hope that this lawsuit will bring real change to the way that state prisoners are treated in county jails.”

“No one should be subjected to what happened to me and the other prisoners,” said plaintiff Steven Drollette. “The State and County need to step up and take responsibility for what they did, and for keeping people safe in the future.”

The abuse of prisoners by their jailers at the Daggett County Jail became known to the public last year when criminal charges were brought against several Daggett County Jail employees and officials. In announcing those charges, Utah Attorney General Sean Reyes described what happened to the prisoners at the Jail as “unbelievably inhumane conduct.” The former Daggett County sheriff and three ex-deputies entered guilty pleas to various state charges, while the guard who stunned Plaintiffs with the Taser, among other incidents, was sentenced to 120 days in jail.

Daggett County is Utah’s least-populated county with 1,000 residents. But the County was able to fill its 80-bed jail by participating in the State’s Inmate Placement Program, which earned the county \$1.3 million in 2016 for housing prisoners entrusted to the custody of the state Department of Corrections for sentences longer than one year. Utah’s Department of Corrections eventually transferred all state prisoners from the County’s jail in February 2017.

On the web: <http://www.acluutah.org/newsroom/item/1453-aclu-of-utah-sues-daggett-county-jailers-and-state-corrections-officials-over-pattern-of-abuse>

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For more information about the ACLU of Utah or to be added to our media contact list, contact Jason Stevenson, Strategic Communications Manager, at (617) 290-8188 (cell), or email, at jstevenson@acluutah.org