

OSBI arrests Kevin Etherington, first ADA in Payne and Logan counties

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By Tres Savage

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Kevin Etherington was booked into the Payne County Jail on Monday, Nov. 28, 2022. (Provided)

Kevin Etherington, the first assistant district attorney for Payne and Logan counties, was arrested and terminated today after being linked to 14 cybertips related to child pornography and endangerment. It marks the second time Etherington has been fired as an assistant district attorney in Oklahoma.

According to a press release, the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation executed a search warrant on Etherington's Stillwater residence Monday, and he was booked into the Payne County Jail on two complaints: aggravated possession of child pornography and one count of violation of the Oklahoma Computer Crimes Act.

District Attorney Laura Thomas, Etherington's direct supervisor, released a lengthy statement Monday evening, noting that the attorney general will assign a different district attorney to prosecute the case:

It is with great personal outrage and devastation that I announce the arrest this evening of an attorney employee of my offices. This person has worked in Payne and Logan counties for 8 years. The arrest was made by the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation, Internet Crimes against Children Unit for possession of child pornography.

Since called to prosecution nearly 38 years ago, much of my career has involved crimes against children and advocacy on their behalf. My offices have zealously prosecuted this crime and I, personally, find the manufacture, distribution and possession of child pornography to be both disgusting and incredibly damaging to individual victims and society. While the accused stands innocent of the alleged crime until proven guilty, my review of the investigation has resulted in this person's dismissal from employment by my office.

It would not be appropriate for my office to prosecute the arrested; therefore, I have initiated the process by which I recuse and ask the Attorney General to assign the case to another District Attorney outside my district. I must sincerely thank the OSBI, Internet Crimes against Children division, for their diligence in finding these offenders throughout our state, regardless of who they may be. Let me be clear that my loyalty is to you, the people I represent in my district, and in upholding the law and protecting our citizens, particularly the most vulnerable of us. Members of the OSBI staffed the matter with me this morning at their headquarters. The people of our State should be proud of this division of OSBI, their complete professionalism and their mission to protect children. Again, I cannot express how dismayed and disappointed I am about this development. This office will not make further comments in this matter so as to not jeopardize prosecution by another District Attorney.

Etherington previously fired in Oklahoma County

Before beginning his employment in Payne and Logan counties in 2014, Kevin Etherington had been an assistant district attorney in Oklahoma County. But in 2013, he was terminated owing to revelations regarding a sexual relationship with a coworker that occurred while he was married to another coworker. Etherington's wife petitioned for divorce in 2015, which was granted in 2016. A custody visitation battle followed in 2020 and 2021, according to court records.

In 2017, after joining Thomas' office and prosecuting crimes in Payne and Logan counties, Kevin Etherington was charged with a felony for removing about \$30 worth of vehicle jack stands from his ex-wife's house. With their divorce finalized six months earlier, Etherington's former spouse said he had no right to take property from her home. That charge was dismissed three months later.

Earlier this year, the Oklahoma Legislature increased funding for increased OSBI staffing to address an "overwhelming" backlog of tips about potential online sexual predators.