

Virginia Supreme Court Acquits Maureen Anne Blake Of Bringing Her Children To School Late

Maureen Anne Blake has [been acquitted](#) by the Virginia Supreme Court of her convictions for delivering her children late to school. The Court's ruling on October 31, 2014 was significant for parents of school age children in Virginia because it clarifies that the compulsory school attendance law doesn't apply to tardiness or absences from school.

Blake is a mother of three daughters living in Purcellville, Virginia who shares custody of her three children with her ex-husband. In December 2011 her daughters were 8, 10, and 11 and attended Lincoln Elementary School in Purcellville. On the school days Blake had custody she took her daughters to school in her car. During the seven weeks between Dec. 1, 2011 and Jan. 19, 2012 her children were late for school five times on days she had custody. They were generally late a few minutes but once for 20 minutes. She was charged on January 25, 2012 with three misdemeanor counts of violating Virginia's compulsory school attendance law (Virginia Code § 22.1-254(A) as enforced by § 22.1-263.) — one count for each child being tardy five times.

Blake was charged based on the Loudoun County Commonwealth's Attorney's contention that tardiness caused by a parent violated the school attendance law's mandate that a custodial parent or guardian "... shall, during the period of each year the public schools are in session and for the



Maureen Anne Blake
(Maureen Anne Blake Facebook page)

same number of days and hours per day as the public schools, [send](#) such child to a public school or to a private, denominational, or parochial school ..." Virginia Code [§ 22.1-254\(A\)](#).

Blake filed a pretrial motion to dismiss the charges that argued the school attendance law did not apply to children who were a few minutes late. The judge denied the motion [in ruling](#) that Code § 22.1-254(A) applies to "tardiness and early departures."

During Blake's bench trial on February 29, 2012 in the Loudoun County Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court the prosecution argued it didn't have to prove she had any knowledge or intent to violate the attendance law, and that her guilt was proved beyond a reasonable doubt by her admission she brought her children to school late multiple times.

Blake's defense was she did not knowingly violate the law and had no intention for her children to be tardy. She explained that some of the tardiness was due to the ADHD that she and one of her children suffers from, and others were caused by one of her daughters oversleeping, one of her daughters wanting to wear a particular item of clothing that she could not find, that Blake had to clean up spilled food, and that she misplaced her purse with her car keys.

The judge found Blake guilty of all three counts -- agreeing with the prosecution that Blake's admission of delivering her three children to school late on five occasions was sufficient evidence to find her guilty. She [was sentenced](#) to pay a fine of \$1,000 for each count, totaling \$3,000. The judge suspended the fine for one year on condition she didn't commit any crimes and that her three children have no unexcused absences or tardy slips on their school records in that time.

Blake appealed [on two grounds](#): First "that Code § 22.1-254 only mandates the enrollment of a child in school and neither a addresses nor prohibits tardiness."; and, second, "the evidence did not support a finding that she knowingly and willfully failed to have the children timely appear at school."

In November 2013 the Virginia Court of Appeals affirmed Blake's convictions. The [Court ruled](#) it couldn't address the scope of

the school attendance statute because she did not preserve that argument for appeal, and that because she "was convicted and sentenced pursuant to Class 3 misdemeanors, the Commonwealth was not required to prove that she knowingly and willfully violated the compulsory attendance law, nor was the Commonwealth required to prove notice." (*Blake v. Commonwealth*, No. 1751-12-4 (VA Ct. of Appeals, 11-19-2013))

Blake appealed to the Virginia Supreme Court, which granted review because her case involved an issue of significant precedential value. On October 31, 2014 the Supreme Court [vacated Blake's convictions](#) in *Blake v. Commonwealth*, No. 140081 (VA Supreme Ct., 10-31-2014). The Court ruled that Code § 22.1-254(A)'s use of the word "send" regarding a child attending school doesn't apply to either tardiness or absences from school. [The Court stated](#):

"We therefore conclude that the requirement that a parent, guardian, or person having control or charge of a minor "send" that child to school requires that such child be enrolled in a school program fulfilling the requirements of Code § 22.1-254(A), including that the program meet for as many days and hours each year as the public school year. We further conclude that, while enrollment necessarily contemplates general attendance, the statute cannot be used to prosecute instances of tardiness.

... For the aforementioned reasons, we hold that Code § 22.1-254 cannot be used to prosecute tardiness. Accordingly, we will reverse the judgment of the Court of Appeals and enter final judgment vacating the defendant's convictions."

The Court's ruling *de facto* acquitted Maureen Blake because she was prosecuted and convicted of a non-existent crime.

Maureen Anne Blake [wrote on her](#) Facebook page after the Virginia Supreme Court's ruling: "Alexis Downing of the Loudoun County Public Defenders Office really is the one with the big win today! She won a precedent setting case. Had she not been diligent and zealous in her work the lower court decision could have adversely affected many parents! My kids number of tardys are not even close (in numbers) to some of the "chronic" offenders who are the ones that should be most grateful their limitation of failure to arrive on time to school has not been made criminal."

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Maureen Anne Blake (3rd from left) with her three children and an unidentified woman on the right in the back. (Maureen Anne Blake Facebook page)

Newlywed Convicted Of Making False Rape Claim To Cover-Up Six-Year Affair

Jessica Gore [has been convicted](#) of perverting the course of justice for fabricating a false rape claim to conceal from her husband of four weeks that she was continuing a six-year affair with another man.

Gore was a 32-year-old mother of two children when she was married in August 2013 in Ashford, England. Ashford is about 55 miles southwest of London.

Less than four weeks after her marriage she came home late on the evening of September 24, 2013. She had left home at 8:15 p.m. claiming she going to babysit a short while for a friend. She arrived back home at 10:20 p.m. When queried by her husband about why she was late, Gore cried and told him that on her way home a man grabbed her from behind as she walked in an alleyway and raped her. Her husband insisted she call the police.

Gore gave a very detailed statement to the police about the assault [in which](#) "She had been shoved to the ground and her trousers and underwear were pulled down and she had then been raped." She also gave a description of her assailant to the police, who collected the clothes she had been wearing as evidence. Her description of her assailant was similar to publicized descriptions of a man who was wanted for other reported sexual assaults in the area. The Kent and



Jessica Gore and her husband Darren on their wedding day in August 2013 (Facebook)

Essex Serious Crime unit was assigned Gore's case. In the course of their investigation the police discovered no physical or forensic evidence an assault had taken place in the alley, the clothes she was wearing didn't show any sign of an assault, and Gore's friend told the police Gore hadn't babysat for her on the evening of September 24. What the police did discover is that she had a lover of six years who lived within walking distance of her house, and she was actually late returning home after an intimate rendezvous with him.

Gore admitted she had fabricated the rape claim when confronted with the evidence that included a statement by her lover the two had been together the evening of the alleged rape, the statement by her friend she hadn't babysat the night of the alleged rape, and numerous sex related text messages between her lover and her over a long period of time.

A week after she had made her rape allegation Gore was charged with perverting the course of justice. She faced up to a year in prison.

Gore pled guilty.

During Gore's her sentencing hearing her lawyer argued for leniency on the basis she was suffering from mental health issues, and he blamed problems as a child for her difficulties with men. Prosecutor Richard Scott argued for jail time because Gore had deliberately lied to the police to cover-up her affair from her husband. Scott explained that while her husband was putting Gore's children to bed at home, [she was](#) "having

sex with her lover" at his house.

Judge Heather Norton [told Gore](#): "This wasn't just a vague allegation. You gave an incredible amount of detail. Sadly, in this case, the allegation of rape proved to be untrue but was not admitted until after extensive inquiries had been carried out by detectives, at a time when there was understandable public concern about a number of earlier assaults being carried out in the Ashford area." Judge Norton gave Gore an eight month prison sentence suspended for a year with good behavior, stating that "I do so with some reluctance and it is really by the skin of your teeth," that she didn't sentence her to prison. Judge Norton may have spared Gore prison because a man wasn't wrongly arrested based on her false rape claim.

Gore's cuckold husband Darrin defended his wife in a post online to a news story about her sentencing. [Darrin wrote](#) that the man his wife willingly carried on a sexual relationship with for six years was "an obsessed deranged individual." Unbeknownst to her husband, Gore may have actually been carrying on with a number of men. One of the people who responded to Darrin's post [wrote that his wife](#) Jessica continued to have a live profile on the dating website [TWO.com](#) that listed her as unmarried. TWO.com describes itself as a "...a dating website, as well as a social networking service that allows users to meet new people in a fun and interactive way... Your ideal match won't resist the temptation."

Sources:

[Wife cried rape](#) to keep her SIX-YEAR affair secret just a MONTH after her wedding, *Daily Mail* (London), February 6, 2014.

[Cry-rape Ashford woman Jessica Gore spared jail](#) after making up alley attack in South Willesborough, *KentOnline.co.uk*, January 29, 2014.

[TWO.com](#)



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[Click here to read](#) the Virginia Supreme Court's ruling in *Blake v. Commonwealth*, No. 140081 (VA Supreme Ct., 10-31 2014).

Source:

[Blake v. Commonwealth](#), No. 140081 (VA Supreme Ct., 10-31-2014) (Vacating convictions and ordering dismissal)

[Blake v. Commonwealth](#), No. 1751-12-4 (VA Ct. of Appeals, 11-19-2013) (Affirming convictions)

[Virginia Code § 22.1-254](#). Compulsory attendance required

[Court spurns Virginia mom's conviction](#) for taking children to school late, By Gary Robertson, WKZO.com (Kalamazoo, MI), October 31, 2014

[Purcellville woman found guilty](#) of children's constant tardiness, By Laura Peters, Loudon Times, March 1, 2014

[Maureen Blake Facebook](#) page



Police Forensic officers investigating at the alleyway where Jessica Gore claimed she was raped on September 24, 2013 (Gary Browne)

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