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LAWRENCE G. WASDEN Attorney General State of Idaho P.O. Box 83720 Boise, Idaho 83720-0010 (208) 334-4534

PAUL R. PANTHER
Deputy Attorney General
Chief, Criminal Law Division

LORI A. FLEMING Deputy Attorney General

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF IDAHO

STATE OF IDAHO,)
Plaintiff-Respondent,) NO. 44033
V.) Latah County Case No. CR-2015-1257
)
JAMES JOSEPH O'BRIEN,) RESPONDENT'S BRIEF
Defendant-Appellant.)
)

<u>Issue</u>

Has O'Brien failed to establish that the district court abused its discretion by imposing an underlying unified sentence of four years, with one year fixed, upon the jury's verdict finding him guilty of possession of methamphetamine?

O'Brien Has Failed To Establish That The District Court Abused Its Sentencing Discretion

A jury found O'Brien guilty of possession of methamphetamine and the district court imposed a unified sentence of four years, with one year fixed, suspended the sentence, and placed O'Brien on supervised probation for three years. (R., pp.130-40.)

O'Brien filed a notice of appeal timely from the judgment of conviction. (R., pp.143-46.)

O'Brien asserts his underlying sentence is excessive in light of his mental health issues, family support, and prior military service. (Appellant's brief, pp.3-5.) The record supports the sentence imposed.

The length of a sentence is reviewed under an abuse of discretion standard considering the defendant's entire sentence. State v. Oliver, 144 Idaho 722, 726, 170 P.3d 387, 391 (2007) (citing State v. Strand, 137 Idaho 457, 460, 50 P.3d 472, 475 (2002); State v. Huffman, 144 Idaho 201, 159 P.3d 838 (2007)). It is presumed that the fixed portion of the sentence will be the defendant's probable term of confinement. Id. (citing State v. Trevino, 132 Idaho 888, 980 P.2d 552 (1999)). Where a sentence is within statutory limits, the appellant bears the burden of demonstrating that it is a clear abuse of discretion. State v. Baker, 136 Idaho 576, 577, 38 P.3d 614, 615 (2001) (citing State v. Lundquist, 134 Idaho 831, 11 P.3d 27 (2000)). To carry this burden the appellant must show that the sentence is excessive under any reasonable view of the facts. Baker, 136 Idaho at 577, 38 P.3d at 615. A sentence is reasonable, however, if it appears necessary to achieve the primary objective of protecting society or any of the related sentencing goals of deterrence, rehabilitation or retribution. Id.

The maximum prison sentence for possession of methamphetamine is seven years. I.C. § 37-2732(c)(1). The district court imposed an underlying unified sentence of four years, with one year fixed, which falls well within the statutory guidelines. (R., pp.130-40.) At sentencing, the state addressed O'Brien's refusal to accept responsibility or be truthful with respect to the instant offense, his minimization of his illegal drug use,

his lack of amenability to treatment due to his denial, and his risk to reoffend. (2/22/16

Tr., p.367, L.21-p.376, L.15.) The district court subsequently articulated its reasons for

imposing O'Brien's sentence. (2/22/16 Tr., p.377, L.22-p.379, L.21.) The state submits

that O'Brien has failed to establish an abuse of discretion, for reasons more fully set

forth in the attached excerpt of the sentencing hearing transcript, which the state adopts

as its argument on appeal. (Appendix A.)

Conclusion

The state respectfully requests this Court to affirm O'Brien's conviction and

sentence.

DATED this 30th day of September, 2016.

/s/_Lori A. Fleming_

LORI A. FLEMING

Deputy Attorney General

VICTORIA RUTLEDGE

Paralegal

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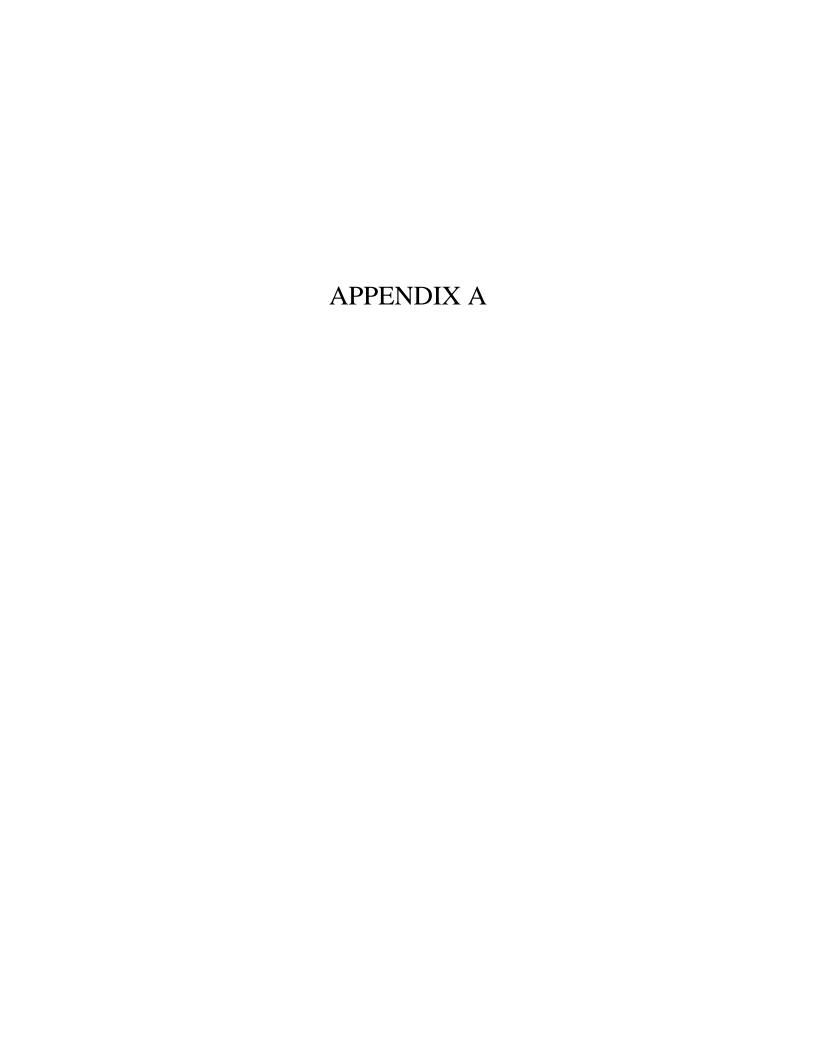
CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that I have this 30th day of September, 2016, served a true and correct copy of the attached RESPONDENTS BRIEF by emailing an electronic copy to:

ELIZABETH ANN ALLRED DEPUTY STATE APPELLATE PUBLIC DEFENDER

at the following email address: briefs@sapd.state.id.us.

__/s/_Lori A. Fleming LORI A. FLEMING Deputy Attorney General



1	served in the U.S. Navy for a little over 4 years, from 364	1	talked her into going back to her family.	36
2	December of 1993 to February of 1998, when he was	2	Um, there - I - he picked up what he kind	
3	honorably discharged.	3	of thought was an empty package. And, um, the place	
4	Um, following the service, um, I think maybe	4	where she was staying - or where she had used this	
5	two or three years after he got out, he, um, was	5	drug, the toilet wasn't working, so she couldn't flush	
6	arrested for his first DUI. I believe he has three DUI	6	it, so he offered to take that and throw it away.	
7	arrests over about a five-year, um, period. Um, he has	7	He stopped at this, um, gas station and	
8	not had any, um, felony convictions. He's not had any	8	forgot that he had it in his pocket. So he dropped	
9	arrests for drug charges.	9	what he thought was an empty package. He didn't really	
10	Um, he did admit during his PSI that he has	10	know what was in it. But he's - that is what he's	
11	had a history of drug use, including use of	11	consistently told me. Um, he's not shared with me that	
12	methamphetamines, but said that he hasn't used any for	12	he's - I mean.	
13	the past three-and-a-half years,	13	THE COURT: Of course, this is at variance	
14	Um, he's been living with his mother and	14	from what he told the police officer when he was	
15	stepfather and helping, um, his mother take care of his	15	Interviewed	
16	elderly grandparents. Um, he won't be able to reside	16	MS. MABBUTT: Right.	
17	there following his conviction, because, um, they have	17	THE COURT: the first time?	
18	weapons there so.	18	MS, MABBUTT: Yes.	
19	Um, he has worked various jobs over the last	19	THE COURT: So.	
20	few years, primarily construction jobs. Um, he has	20	MS. MABBUTT: I understand that.	
21	done some, um, work, but he hasn't been employed	21	THE COURT: All right.	
22	regularly since these charges because of the pending	22	MS. MABBUTT: So.	
23	charges and also now just not knowing what the sentence	23	THE COURT: Thank you. Mr. O'Brien, you no	W
24	is going to be.	24	have an opportunity to make a statement, you're under	
25	Um, his primary goal end has been working	25	no obligation to make a statement, but I'm happy to	

1	with friends and trying to get them off drugs. He has	65 1	hear from you if you'd like to make a statement. 367
2	seen, you know, how it's destroyed, um, quite a few of	2	THE DEFENDANT: Thank you, Your Honor. Um,
3	his friends. And that's been one of his goals.	3	you're correct, that it is different from what I had
4	Um, we would ask that you follow the	4	told Officer Dahlinger. And the truth was, Your Honor,
5	recommendations of the PSI and - and place him on	5	it was such a small thing, I didn't even remember it.
6	probation.	6	I didn't know what he was talking about until like 20
7	THE COURT: So, um, Ms. Mabbutt, I got the	7	minutes after he left. And then it was kind of a -
8	distinct impression that Ms. Behrens didn't believe	8	oh, poo, you know. I know exactly what he was talking
9	Mr. O'Brien.	9	about now. I was asked to get rid of that and, you
10	MS. MABBUTT: About his drug use?	10	know, it was gone. I - I didn't even think about it,
11	THE COURT: Yes.	11	you know. And he kind of showed up about three weeks
12	MS, MABBUTT: Yeah. I kind of got that	12	later. I would say, you know.
13	Impression, as well, but.	13	I was speaking with my mom afterwards, and
14	THE COURT: I have to say I share some of	14	sitting there kind of watching TV, and I was like, oh,
15	those concerns. Um, I'm having a difficult time	15	no. I knew what he was talking about, but he had
16	understanding Mr. O'Brien's denials. Any explanation	16	already gone.
17	for that?	17	THE COURT: Anything else you'd like to say?
18	MS. MABBUTT: Um, no. His - his - what he	18	THE DEFENDANT: No, sir.
19	wrote in his PSI was consistent with what he's told me	19	THE COURT: Mr. Cavanagh, the State's
20	as far as the events of this charge, that he had, um,	20	argument with regard to sentending?
21	been at a friend's house, trying to talk her out of	21	MR. CAVANAGH: Thanks, Judge. As the Court
22	using some drugs.	22	is well aware, you are tasked today with fashloning a
23	And, um, she, I think, was kind of sick from	23	reasonable sentence. And that is based off the goals
24	something that she had purchased, which she didn't	24	of sentencing, which are the good order and protection
25	think to be what she had purchased. And so, um, he had	25	of society, as well as rehabilitation, and deterrence

_				
1	and realisation. And based on and, as well as in	68 1	Um, I will note that the PSI is almost	370
2		2	entirely self-reporting. Even the issue, for example,	
3	set forth in Idaho Code 19-2521, our position is that	3	that he was in the Navy and honorably discharged. That	
4	you should impose a Judgment of Conviction, you should	4	may be true. Unfortunately there's no DD 214 form, or	
5	sentence Mr. O'Brien to four years imprisonment with	5	some other documentation from the military showing	
6	one year being determinant and three years	6	that. Um, and and even if that aside, that is just	
7	indeterminate, and that you should retain jurisdiction.	7	one example, as I look through almost paragraph after	
8	We also ask that you order restitution as previously	8	paragraph after paragraph: According to Mr. O'Brien,	
9	discussed, and we are not seeking any fine.	9	comma; according to Mr. O'Brien, comma; according to	
10	Judge, I guess the two main reasons for our	10	이렇게 그렇게 그렇게 그렇게 하는 것이 되었다. 그렇게 그렇게 그렇게 되었다면서 그 그 그리고 있다.	
11	recommendation are one, which is simply what he did,	11	이 50000 NG 15000 NG 15000 NG	
12	that he possessed methamphetamine, which is a serious	12	of these events.	
13	charge, but it's also a charge where sometimes people	13	And so when you look at something like the	
14	go on probation and sometimes they go on a rider. And	14	LSI score that says he's moderate, well, that based on	
15	it appears, based off of what Mr. O'Brien said in the		his own representations of his drug use, directly	
16	PSI, that a rider is appropriate.		contradicted by the evidence in trial, which I'm going	5
17	And I want to preface my remarks by being a	17	to discuss. I'll just do it right now.	
18	little bit on the careful side. I did review, uh, the	18	Um, in the PSI he says was residual dust	
19	standards to be considered, and a defendant's	19	that he received. But then he saw what was presented	
20	continuing, essentially, at least in this case, partial		in court, and that doesn't even look like the right	
21	denial of guilt, and the fact that he went to trial and		bag. Um, he says, perhaps most importantly on page 9,	
22	the fact that he might appeal, we are not asking you to		the second-to-last paragraph, that he reported last	
23	consider those factors in the sentence. Um, we're not	1 015 1515	그는 그가 있다. 하지 시간 현실하는 것들은 것은 사람들은 아이가 하지 않는 것이 없는 것이다.	
24	asking, that would be considered a vindictive sentence,	- 1	approximately three-and-a-half years ago, and that he	
25	which is not appropriate, and we are not asking for him		had tried heroin on one occasion three years ago.	
1	to be somehow coerced into admitting something and 36	9 1	Well, when he was interviewed by the police	371
2	giving up any chance of appeal.	2	officer, which was on videotape, it was put into	
3	But, um, when we consider whether he should		evidence, to my knowledge there's been nothing to	-
4	be on probation, the purpose of probation is to give		indicate that there's any issue with that interview or	ì
	him the opportunity to be rehabilitated under proper		statements, um, he said, first of all. I'm not sure	- 1
	Control and cumunician, and according to the use	28 **	whether is the trees of the tree in the tr	i

6 control and supervision, and according to the, um, 7 Court of Appeals In State versus Kellis, which is 148 8 Idaho 812, and it's a 2010 case that came through this 9 court, the Court of Appeals stated: That the court is 10 not entirely prohibited in considering continued 11 assertions of innocence as a factor in this sentencing 12 decision. Rather a Court may properly consider a 13 defendant's refusal to acknowledge guilt when 14 evaluating the defendant's rehabilitation potential, 15 because admowledgment of guilt is a critical first 16 step toward rehabilitation. 17 And in our position, not only did 18 Mr. O'Brien fall to take responsibility in the PSI, it 19 really appears that what he said in the PSI is not 20 true. And so even at this stage of the proceedings, 21 he's telling the potential probation officer, certainly 22 a representative from the Department of Correction, 23 telling her information that's to be provided for this 24 court at sentencing, that does not appear credible,

25 based on the evidence at trial.

6 what was in that baggy, which implies that he might 7 know which baggy the officer was talking about. But 8 again in the PSI, he says he completely forgot he had a 9 baggy. 10 And then shortly thereafter, when the 11 officer talks about having video, he says, I don't even 12 remember having it, meaning the baggy. And then this 13 is important. He said, "I mean, it's not a secret that 14 I do screw around with that stuff. But I - I don't 15 remember having it at that time." When he's asked -16 and I realize it's a little vague, because they talk 17 about stuff - there is a mention of meth later in the 18 conversation, although I think any reasonable person 19 reviewing the video would understand that they both 20 knew they were talking about, at least, drugs, whether 21 It was meth or heroin, which were the two drugs, 22 ultimately that they discuss explicitly, he says -- Mr. 23 O'Brien says at one point, "I mean, it's not a secret 24 that I do screw around with that stuff, but I - I 25 don't remember having it at that time."

1	When asked where he's getting his stuff, he	372	and I put that in quotes, trying, although it's not	37
2	says, "Um, come on, man," Indicating he doesn't want to	- 1:	in quotes, but that's how I understand that word to be	
3	say who is giving him the drugs. When he's asked how		used trying be helpful but then ends up being	
4	much he's paying for it, he says, "Not very much.	- 1	caught and then ends up being caught up in a bad	47
5	Well, too much." Um, when asked whether he's injected	- 1:		
6	it, he says, "I don't inject drugs." When he's asked		Um, and then he kind of continues with	
7	If he's been smoking it, he says, on occasion.	- 1:	Mr. O'Brien, even in court to this day where this	
8	Then he says, he doesn't remember having it	- 10	narrative of, just trying to help people, which	
9	that night, and he's very clear that he's trying to say	1	를 가입하는데 그렇게요	
10	that he does remember having drugs at that moment in	1	on with that issue. But, um, instead of focusing on	
11	time. He's not saying, I haven't used meth in three	1	that, the focus needs to be on the fact that	
12	years. There is no way I had that. This is crazy.	1	Mr. O'Brien possessed drugs, and he continues to not	**
13	Um, and then he says, "I really don't do	1	see that he has an issue with drugs. He continues to,	
14	that stuff as much as you guys think I do."	1	uh, based on what's been presented, the evidence at	
15	He later says uh, and this is an	1	trial versus what's in the PSI, our position is the	
16	Interesting, uh, portion, too, where he says, "Well,	1	most logical and reasonable inference is that he has	
17	It's that It's more that I hang out with the kinds	1	essentially impeached his own self, and what he said in	
18	of people I want to help, you see. And it's kind of	11	the PSI is not true.	
19	hard to help people while you're wagging your finger."	19	So, those are really disturbing	
20	And then he later says he hasn't been hooked on	20	considerations for the Court, and to the extent things	
21	anything, when asked about that and so forth.	2	like in the PSI say that he might - that he's a	
22	So, our position is that you have a	2	candidate for probation and his LSI score is moderate,	
23	defendant who is sitting before you, and even his most	23	there again, that is based on his own self-reporting	
24	recent representations just now, just don't jibe with	1 1 207	primarily, and not on any type of determination of what	
25	the evidence.	25	is really happening in his life.	

Um, I will note another issue, him moving on 375 Um, it's -- and the evidence also showed in 2 court, UH, photographs of the drugs. And we had the --2 to a more minor issue, but this issue with his 3 the package themselves, that it was clear that it was 3 residence, uh, I'm -- I'm unclear where he's going to 4 more than just dust. It was obviously drugs inside. 4 be living tonight. For all -- all of this time we've 5 And yet he's trying to distance himself from that. And 5 had, it just seems clear that -- that his current 6 so really when you look at this PSI, there's just 6 arrangements are not appropriate, and that he should be 7 really no weight to put on it. 7 living there were he placed on probation. So that's R And I understand the Department of 8 another concern, that he's not -- in that position, 9 Correction, they -- they can only do so much collateral 9 It's concerning that this work issue where he's been 10 research. They can only place so much weight on, um, 10 working on and off under the table, hasn't been while 11 the fact that it appears that he might not be telling 11 this case has been pending. Well, this case has been 12 the truth. And I do think that the PSI author made 12 pending, for - certainly since May. He was arraigned 13 that very dear that, um, there's a real question as to 13 In this court in August, um, and so forth. He's been 14 that issue. 14 out of custody. He was summonsed in on this case. So 15 Um, and she says directly that, um - um, 15 there's no reason why any period of time here he could 16 under investigator's comments on page 14, when 16 have been working 40 plus hours a week in a job. But 17 Mr. O'Brien said he hadn't used drugs in years, but he 17 that's just another example of an excuse. 18 took the baggy to help a friend, saying he thought it He makes other excuses in the PSI. Points 18 19 was just trash, the PSI author says, this is difficult 19 fingers at the jury, which were just an empty 20 to believe, considering he further explained the reason 20 accusation that had no basis for it. There's no 21 the female gave him the baggy was because she was going 21 explanation of what was inferred with the jury. 22 to see her daughter and didn't want it on her person. 22 There's no explanation of how that would have 23 If it was just trash the female subject could have just 23 prejudiced his case. Likewise he makes a baseless, 24 taken care of it herself. This marks one of the 24 empty, and meritless accusation against his own 25 numerous instances where Mr. O'Brien seems to be trying 25 attorney.

25	Mr. O'Brien's completion. It also include his criminal	1		presentence, that I would have accepted that plea at	
24	comprised of more than just the contents of	Ì		I don't have any doubt, based on my viewing the	
23	for is the defendant's version. And the LSI is	ļ		in the county jail and be on probation for three years.	
22	plus pages of that, that's exactly what they're asking			plead guilty to this offense and have him serve 30 days	
21	Um, particularly having helped somebody fill out the 20		21	they had worked out an agreement to have Mr. O'Brien	
20	version of events, and, um, that's pretty standard.	Ì	20	I've had counsel come to me and said that	
19	Mr. Cavanagh talks about the PSI being Mr. O'Brien's		19	pretrial.	
18	MS. MABBUTT: Uh, yes, Your Honor. Well,		18	trial than are presented for purposes of a guilty plea	
17	Ms. Mabbutt, anything in response?		17	And certainly facts can look much more egregious at a	
16	THE COURT: Thank you, Mr. Cavanagh.		16	presented. I think those are two different issues.	
15	all, and he should go on a rider.	1		a reason to deviate upwards, having seen the evidence	
14	dld lt. He possessed meth. And he doesn't get it at		14	knew before having gone to trial and thought there was	
	it's a guilty verdict, it's because he's guilty. He	- 1	13	seen trials and learned more about the offense than I	
12	kind of statement about the jury or his attorney that		12	I can say that on certain occasions I've	
11	would have come back with that verdict. It's not some			don't think I can do that.	
10	verdict. In fact, our position is, any rational jury		10	against them, that they have chosen to go to trial. I	
9	reasonable for the jury to come back with a guilty		9		
8	as much as they think and so forth, of course, it's		8	it's an egregious offense, frankly. Um, I tell people	
7	um, you know, people know I do that stuff. I don't do		7	if it's, um, found with scales. And it's not as if	
6	tells the officer things like well, it's, you know		6	It's not as if it's for sale. It's not as	
5	ground, that had just been swept and mopped. And he		5	would be individual consumption.	
4	in his hand, dropping to the floor and hitting the		4	think quantity that I think is of a nature that it	
3	shots of it and videoed of it, where you see the drugs		3	methamphetamine case, in a jeweler's bag, that is, I	
2	on video with drugs in his hand, and we have still		2	a sex offense case, and this is a possession of	
1	This is a case where he was literally caught	376	1	responsibility. At the same time, the Kellis case was	378

1	history, which is the DUIs and DWPs, his financial 377	1	the time.	379
2	resources and his jobs and skills. Um, and as far as	2	I think I would be skeptical about	
3	his military background, um, Mr. O'Brien has that he	3	Mr. O'Brien's success on probation given his lack of	İ
4	wasn't asked to produce anything. He has the	4	acceptance of responsibility, but I think that's a	
5	paperwork. It doesn't sound like that was an issue	5	different Issue.	- 1
6	from Ms. Behrens. And she, Ms. Behrens, said, based on	6	And so having sat through the trial and	Ì
7	the level of assessed risk and need and other	7	observed the evidence, I don't think I would find a	
8	protective factors, as discussed about James O'Brien,	8	reason to deviate in an upwards fashlon, even though,	
9	appears to be an appropriate candidate for an order of	9	Mr. O'Brien, you appear to be truth challenged.	ĺ
10	probation.	10	I don't believe your story. I don't believe	
11	So we would ask that you follow that. That	11	what you're saying. Um, I think you knew what it was.	
12	would include drug testing, and he would follow	12	I think you are concocting a story to make it look less	
13	recommended treatment. Um, she recommends individual	13	like that was your personal possession. But I'm not	
14	and/or group therapy and some vocational, um,	14	going to pound you for that. I'm not going to send you	- 1
15	rehabilitation resources. So we ask that you, um,	15	on a rider for that.	
16	place him on probation.	16	Uh, but I think you need to come to grips	- [
17	THE COURT: Thank you, Ms. Mabbutt. Does	17	with your substance use and to deal with it. If you	-
18	the defendant have any lawful cause to show why	18	can, I think you can stay outside of the confines the	- 1
19	judgment should not be pronounced against him at this	19	penitentiary. If you can't, I think we'll have to	
20	time?	20	Increase the sanctions and increase the ways in which	- 1
21	MS. MABBUTT: No, Your Honor.	21	we deal with your substance use.	
22	THE COURT: Well, having presided over the	22	So, Ms. Mabbutt, my intention if it's	
23	Kellis case, I'm more than familiar with that case and	23	acceptable to Mr. O'Brien, is to place him on three	
24	the ruling that would enable me to gravitate upwards	24	years of probation. I intend to withhold judgment	
25	for Mr. O'Brien's failure or refusal to take	25	under my standard terms and conditions. My Intention	