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### PRESS RELEASE

#### For Immediate Release

Date: 05/17/2026  
Re: Court Unsealed Peterson Transcript

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## COURT ORDER REVEALS CONTENT OF A SEALED CONVERSATION PETERSON AND HIS DEFENSE TEAM HAD WITH TRIAL JUDGE OUTSIDE THE PRESENCE OF THE PROSECUTION

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*Peterson's Defense Team Receives Two Judicial Admonishments for Omitting Important  
Facts and Providing Misleading Statements to the Court*

**MODESTO, California** — San Mateo Superior Court Judge Elizabeth Hill denied Scott Peterson's Third Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus in its entirety on April 27, 2026. Although Scott Peterson and his most recent defense team claimed to possess "new evidence" and insisted he was "actually innocent," the facts, the actual evidence, the official court record and Judge Hill disagreed.

#### Court Unsealed Transcript to Address Peterson's Allegations Made Under Oath

One month before ruling on the petition, Judge Hill ordered the unsealing of a transcript from an in-chambers meeting held during the trial between Peterson, his attorneys and the trial judge, Alfred Delucchi, on October 21, 2004. The meeting took place *ex parte* (one party excluded), meaning no one from the District Attorney's Office was present.

The reporter's transcript was kept confidential and sealed from the public and the prosecution. The prosecution team was unaware of the content of the conversation and did not legally have access to it until Judge Hill ordered the transcript to be unsealed on March 25, 2026.

Judge Hill stated that her decision to unseal the transcript was based, in part, on its relevance in her ruling regarding some of the allegations made under oath or penalty of perjury in Peterson's latest petition which were specifically discussed in the sealed transcript. (See Order Unsealing Portions of the Record, March 25, 2026)

Present at the October 2004 in-chambers meeting were Peterson, his defense attorneys Mark Geragos and Pat Harris, and his investigator Carl Jensen. The meeting occurred after the prosecution received a fax related to the case and promptly shared it with the defense. The fax contained information about an inmate at the Stanislaus County jail who claimed to possess various information relevant to the Laci Peterson case—such as a woman pawning a Croton watch, rumors about Laci confronting burglars, and speculation that the Hells Angels or others might have been involved in the murders. The prosecution was excused from chambers and Judge Delucchi proceeded to meet with Peterson and his defense team.

### **Transcript Revealed Peterson's and his Attorneys' Actual Knowledge**

For the past two years, Peterson has made numerous baseless accusations against the prosecution. One accusation began just after a jury convicted Peterson of murdering his wife Laci and their unborn son Conner. Peterson claimed the prosecution committed misconduct by suppressing evidence relating to a tip, referred to as the "Aponte tip."

The Aponte tip related to Lieutenant Xavier Aponte, a California state prison correctional officer, who called the Modesto Police Department tipline in January 2003 and reported a conversation between an inmate and the inmate's brother discussing Laci's disappearance and a burglary that occurred across the street. This tip was provided to the defense in May 2003 as part of discovery.

After the trial, the defense accused the prosecution of withholding the Aponte tip and any related follow-up investigation or recordings, suggesting prosecutorial suppression of evidence in a Motion for New Trial. In denying the New Trial Motion in 2005, the judge found that discovery receipts proved that the defense had been provided the Aponte Tip.

More importantly, the unsealed transcript provides further compelling evidence that Peterson and his defense counsel were fully aware of the Aponte tip, directly contradicting their later claim in the Motion for New Trial filed on February 25, 2005. During the October 2004 in-chambers meeting, Peterson's investigator reported to Judge Delucchi that he had already spoken with Lieutenant Aponte, during the trial, and that the investigator was previously in Modesto pursuing leads to track down the inmate's brother by interviewing his family and other associates.

Further, in 2015, Peterson's original habeas counsel, Lawrence Gibbs, uncovered the defense investigator's notes showing his follow-up on the Aponte tip *as early as* June 2004, noting direct contact with the prison and its officials. Peterson submitted these investigative notes as an exhibit to his 2015 petition, which asserted a claim of ineffective assistance of counsel against his trial attorneys.

The unsealed transcript not only demonstrated the defense's prior knowledge and active investigation into the Aponte tip, but showed they made misrepresentations to the court. The record confirms that the defense had the information well before the October 21, 2004 fax. Peterson's assertion of suppression of the Aponte tip by the prosecution is both inaccurate and misleading. Still, Peterson filed a Third Petition making the same accusation once again. The court's findings, backed by the transcript and the defense's

own notes and statements, make it clear that Peterson’s claims lack credibility and were properly rejected by Judge Delucchi in 2005, by the California Supreme Court in 2020 and again by Judge Hill on April 27, 2026.

### **Transcript Reveals Peterson’s Defense Had the Pawn Slip He Claimed Police Were Withholding**

During the missing person investigation, Peterson claimed that Laci could have been taken for her jewelry. The police followed up and determined that Laci’s only unaccounted jewelry was a pair of screw-back diamond earrings (which police believe she was wearing and were lost in the Bay where Peterson disposed of Laci’s body) and a non-functioning diamond-encrusted Croton watch. During their investigation, the police found that a Croton watch had been pawned by a woman a week after Laci’s disappearance, but the description of this watch did not match Laci’s diamond watch.

In his latest petition, Peterson accused the police of secretly investigating the woman’s pawned Croton watch, while claiming the prosecution destroyed, withheld and suppressed information about the investigation. However, the facts clearly refute this narrative.

Police reports show that both the woman and her boyfriend confirmed that a private investigator, hired by Peterson, visited their home between late February and early March 2003. This was several weeks prior to Peterson’s arrest on April 18, 2003. During this visit, the woman handed over the pawn ticket to the defense investigator, enabling Peterson’s team to attempt to redeem the watch for themselves—proving that the defense was not only aware of the pawned item but had direct access to the pawned Croton watch. The woman claimed the watch was hers, which her boyfriend confirmed, and both denied the watch was Laci’s. In his latest petition, Peterson and his defense team denied having access to the pawn slip. The unsealed transcript indicates differently.

The unsealed transcript revealed that the defense had the pawn ticket in their possession – critical facts that Peterson and his current defense counsel omitted from their petition.

### **Court Admonished Peterson’s Defense Team**

In the court’s ruling, Judge Hill admonished Peterson and his current defense team for omitting these relevant facts. The court found that Geragos’ statement was “conspicuously absent” from Peterson’s verified factual allegations. The court wrote in its ruling:

“[T]he court is troubled by the verified petition’s failure to assert forthrightly **all** of the facts relevant to the determination of who acquired the pawn ticket and explain the statements of counsel claiming to have acquired it themselves. Once again, the petition treads unsettlingly close to the bounds of permissible advocacy under Rule 3.3 of the Rules of Professional Conduct.”

- Judge Hill, Order, Apr. 27, 2026 at p. 78, fn. 14 [boldface in original].)

Rule 3.3 of the California Rules of Professional Conduct requires all attorneys to maintain honesty and candor in their communications with the court.

Judge Hill further observed that Peterson and his current counsel omitted pertinent facts and misrepresented the situation when alleging that a police detective provided false testimony in a separate

claim. Judge Hill admonished Peterson and his current defense team for omitting these relevant facts and misleading the court.

“[T]he court is required to take the petition’s factual allegations as true. Given that standard of pleading, counsel has a corresponding ethical duty to ensure that allegations in a verified pleading that the court is required to accept as true *are* actually true. The instant petition’s above-cited incomplete and misleading allegations regarding Det. Brocchini’s purportedly false testimony skirt precariously close to a violation of counsel’s ethical duty of candor to the tribunal.”

- Judge Hill, Order p. 54, (*italics in original*).



Peterson has yet to take responsibility for his actions. Laci’s grieving mother, Sharon, addressed Peterson at trial and stated:

*“Your selfish act of murdering Laci has caused unbearable pain and heartache. You took a beautiful life and her precious baby away from us. There is a huge hole in my heart that will never heal. I grieve every single day for Laci and Conner. I miss Laci so much.”* (121 RT 21817)

Since his conviction, Peterson has filed a motion for a new trial, an appeal, three petitions for writ of habeas corpus, four requests for post-conviction DNA testing, and three motions for post-conviction discovery. “Peterson’s 2004 conviction has been upheld through two decades of post-conviction litigation and again with this ruling in 2026,” said District Attorney Jeff Laugero. “Laci, Conner and their family deserve the finality that justice promised them.”

For more information regarding the details of the court’s Order or how to obtain a copy of the unsealed transcript, see the District Attorney’s formal Press Release dated May 12, 2026, available at: <https://www.stanislaus-da/org/pdf/news/2026/press-release-5-12-2026-peterson.pdf>