

# Lehigh County district attorney sues local blogger for defamation



By [Sarah Cassi](#) | For [lehighvalleylive.com](#)

[Email the author](#) | [Follow on Twitter](#)

on February 12, 2015 at 2:22 PM, updated February 12, 2015 at 3:09 PM

A local blogger's repeated statements disparaging Lehigh County District Attorney Jim Martin have become too much for the elected official.

Martin is suing Allentown resident Bill Villa over statements Villa has made on the [Bobby Gunther Walsh](#) radio show on WAEB and online on Villa's blog and Facebook page.

When contacted by phone, Villa declined to answer questions, preferring to email a prepared statement.

"Mr. Martin, with his latest nonsense/vendetta litigation, is attempting to silence my free speech -- free speech that involves verifiable facts and my opinions. If the first judge who sees this malicious and vexatious farce of a case doesn't toss it, I intend to pulverize Mr. Martin in court," Villa said in the statement.

The 17-page lawsuit was filed Feb. 6 and served to Villa on Tuesday, records say. Asked if he was represented by an attorney, Villa said he would rather not say at this time.

On his blog called "[Lehigh Valley Somebody](#)," Villa cited "Jim Martin's malicious muzzling of my free speech at WAEB" and links to coverage of the lawsuit under the headline "DA Jim Martin Takes The Bait." Villa also directs readers to listen to his WAEB shows on [YouTube](#).

Martin's attorney, Jason Pearlman, would only say, "The complaint sets forth the claims in detail. We look forward to presenting our case in court."

The suit also names Walsh, and WAEB's parent companies -- iHeartMedia Inc. and iHeartCommunications, previously known as Clear Channel. A message left at the [WAEB](#) offices asking about the suit was not immediately returned.

## Crooked and corrupt

Martin quotes portions from some of Villa's 11 appearances on the Bobby Gunther Walsh show, as well as Villa's comments on his blog, his Facebook page and his re-airing of the WAEB shows on YouTube.

Villa has said Martin is crooked and corrupt, the lawsuit says, and accused him of "fixing" criminal cases in Lehigh County, concealing evidence, lying to judges, victims and victims' families, playing "favorites" and "colluding to conceal the truth," Martin says.

In the suit, Martin denies each claim, line by line, and says the statements have blackened and besmirched his reputation, exposed him to public ridicule, conveyed the impression he is unfit to be district attorney and caused him distress and mental anguish.

### **A fatal drunken crash**

The rancorous relationship between Villa and Martin began when Martin prosecuted the man who killed Villa's daughter, 25-year-old Sheena Villa, in a 2006 drunken driving crash.

Robert Labarre pleaded guilty to homicide by vehicle while driving drunk, and **was sentenced to five-and-a-half to 12 years** in prison. The sentence was almost double the standard of three to six years, but less than the maximum term of 9 1/2 to 19 years.

Villa said the sentence was a "huge win for us" on Walsh's radio show, according to Martin's lawsuit.

But it was the charges leveled against Labarre that first drew Villa's ire. Martin said Villa thought Labarre should have been charged with third-degree murder in the case and disagreed with Martin's decision not to bring the charge. Villa says exactly that on his blog.

Since that case, "Villa has held a personal animus toward Martin and has declared his intention to 'dethrone,' 'destroy,' 'expose,' and 'blow Jim Martin out of the water,'" according to the lawsuit.

The suit cites specific statements Villa made during broadcasts last year on Feb. 24, May 29, June 16, July 21 and July 22.

Martin claims even though Walsh himself said on-air that Villa has a "vendetta" against Martin, that he continued to provide Villa with a forum to make his defamatory statements. Martin said Walsh was warned about having Villa as a guest, something Walsh mentioned on-air, the suit says.

In an Aug. 14 Facebook post, Villa stated about Martin "I'm only going to keep making it worse for you. Stay tuned for my next appearance on WEAB...," the suit says.

Villa has gone beyond defaming Martin about the Labarre case, the suit claims, and has made defamatory statements about the prosecution of Chris Squires, **Amber Washko**, Jennifer Gehringer and **James Lauer** for DUI-related crimes, the suit says.

*Sarah Cassi may be reached at [scassi@express-times.com](mailto:scassi@express-times.com). Follow her on Twitter [@SarahCassi](https://twitter.com/SarahCassi). Find [lehighvalleylive.com](http://lehighvalleylive.com) on **Facebook**.*

---

Registration on or use of this site constitutes acceptance of our **User Agreement** and **Privacy Policy**

© 2017 PennLive LLC. All rights reserved (**About Us**).

The material on this site may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, cached or otherwise used, except with the prior written permission of PennLive LLC.

**Community Rules** apply to all content you upload or otherwise submit to this site.

[▶ Ad Choices](#)