

## **A Pattern of Questionable Stops: How a Wright County Deputy's Credibility is Challenged by His Own Record**

Wright County Watch MN

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**Video:** <https://youtu.be/O2BblyyPZnU?feature=shared>

**WRIGHT COUNTY, MN** – On the afternoon of April 1, 2024, a traffic stop for a simple seatbelt violation on a Wright County road evolved into a 38-minute roadside detention, complete with a K-9 drug sniff. The incident concluded without any drug charges, but an in-depth review of the deputy's report, video evidence, and the deputy's documented history reveals a troubling pattern that raises profound questions about constitutional policing, officer credibility, and the very foundation of probable cause.

The stop, conducted by Wright County Sheriff's [Deputy Matthew Lisic](#), was not an isolated event. It fits a recurring model where minor infractions have been escalated into criminal investigations based on a checklist of highly subjective symptoms. In at least two prior cases, this same deputy's methods have led to adverse outcomes: one where a judge ruled his actions unconstitutional, and another where his detailed observations of drug impairment were directly contradicted by scientific lab results.

### **The Anatomy of the 38-Minute Stop**

According to Deputy Lisic's official narrative of the April 1st incident, the seatbelt stop immediately pivoted into a criminal investigation. The report details a series of highly questionable observations: the passenger allegedly had "bouncing" eyes, was grinding his jaw, and had a "visibly increased" heartbeat that the deputy claimed to see through his chest—a difficult feat given that it was a cold April day in Minnesota, requiring layered clothing.

The driver's eyes were noted as "bloodshot," but the deputy tellingly omitted her on-scene explanation that this was due to her contact lenses. Finally, a butane torch was visible in the console.

### **Direct Contradiction: The Passenger's Video**

The deputy's narrative is further challenged by direct evidence from the scene. A 21-minute video recorded by the passenger provides a clear view of his demeanor throughout the extended stop.

**Contrary to the deputy's report, the video footage shows no signs of the alleged "jaw grinding" or "bouncing eyes."** This direct discrepancy between the sworn report and the video record raises a critical question: were the deputy's observations genuine, or were they a pretext to justify the prolonged detention and K-9 search?

Based on these factors, Lisic reported he had formed reasonable suspicion of drug activity and radioed for a K-9 unit, a decision that transformed a brief traffic stop into a prolonged seizure.

*Under the U.S. Supreme Court's clear precedent in Rodriguez v. United States, police are prohibited from extending a traffic stop beyond the time reasonably required to complete its initial mission—in this case, issuing a seatbelt ticket—without independent, reasonable suspicion of a separate crime. The validity of Lisic's 38-minute detention hinges entirely on the credibility of his stated suspicions.*

## **A Foundation Challenged by the Public Record**

The deputy's justifications for the stop's expansion face significant legal and factual challenges, primarily stemming from his own documented history.

### **1. The Factual Contradiction – The Payne Case (86-CR-25-1718):**

In a March 2025 Felony DUI arrest, Deputy Lisic reported a nearly identical list of symptoms to justify his belief that a driver was severely impaired by methamphetamine. His report detailed a “visibly rapid heartbeat,” clenching hands, and trembling cheeks. Based on this assessment, he arrested the man and obtained a warrant for a urine sample. However, court records confirm the outcome: **the charges were dismissed because the state crime lab analysis “failed to show the presence of controlled substances.”**

This case is critical because it provides objective, scientific evidence that the deputy's checklist of subjective indicators is not a reliable tool for identifying drug impairment. It establishes a documented instance where his detailed, sworn observations were proven factually incorrect.

### **2. The Judicial Finding of Unconstitutional Conduct – The 2021 DWI Dismissal:**

The pattern of questionable conduct is further established by a 2021 case where Deputy Lisic's actions were formally reviewed by a Wright County judge. After a hearing, the judge issued an order finding that the deputy had engaged in an “**unlawful expansion of the initial stop**” and “**lacked probable cause to arrest.**” As a result, the judge suppressed all evidence obtained from the stop and dismissed all charges against the defendant.

This ruling is not an opinion; it is a formal judicial finding that this deputy's methods in a similar situation were unconstitutional.

## **The Unraveling of the April 1st Stop**

Viewed through the lens of this documented history and contradictory video evidence, the justification for the stop collapses. An analysis of the key pieces of evidence from the deputy's report shows a reliance on legally flawed inferences and discredited observations:

- **The Butane Torch – A Flawed Inference:** Butane torches have always been legal, multi-use tools. While police previously could infer a connection to illegal drug activity, the 2023 legalization of cannabis in Minnesota changed the legal landscape. The most common and reasonable inference for a torch in a vehicle is now for the lawful consumption of cannabis.

The deputy's report does not articulate any specific evidence to suggest the torch was being used for an illegal substance rather than a legal one, making his inference of criminal activity unreasonable.

- Furthermore, the driver of the vehicle was reportedly searching for a lighter to light a cigarette for a significant portion of the stop, a fact that directly contradicts the deputy's report of a butane torch being in the vehicle and was conveniently omitted from his report. This detail, captured on the passenger's video, further challenges the deputy's narrative and the basis for the extended detention.
- **The Subjective "Checklist" – A History of Unreliability:** The credibility of the deputy's observations of impairment (bouncing eyes, jaw grinding, visible heartbeat) is severely compromised. They are directly contradicted by the passenger's video from the scene and rendered suspect by the Payne case, where his nearly identical "checklist" was proven wrong by a lab test. The deputy also chose to omit the driver's innocent, on-scene explanation for her bloodshot eyes. This pattern suggests the list may be a boilerplate script rather than a set of genuine, contemporaneous observations.
- **The Pretextual Investigation – A Question of Motive:** The deputy's report states he called for the K-9 before attempting to conduct Field Sobriety Tests. When the driver refused the FSTs, he immediately abandoned the DWI inquiry. This sequence suggests the DWI investigation was not a good-faith effort to assess impairment, but a tactic to fill the time during the unconstitutional wait for the drug dog.

The central legal question becomes: how can an officer prove his subjective observations are credible when his history shows a pattern of similar observations being ruled unlawful by a judge or proven factually wrong by a state crime lab, and when they are contradicted by video evidence from the incident itself? In a court hearing, the burden would be on the state to prove the stop's expansion was legal. A defense attorney would use these prior cases and the new video to impeach the deputy's testimony, arguing that his "checklist" is not a series of genuine observations but a boilerplate script used to manufacture suspicion.

While the 38-minute detention of the driver and passenger ended with only seatbelt tickets, the incident serves as a powerful case study in constitutional law, demonstrating how a documented pattern of questionable conduct—now backed by contradictory video—can render an officer's stated justifications for a prolonged seizure legally indefensible.