



Attorney Crump: Grand Jury Decision Fails to Explain Blunt Force Trauma to Nolan Wells' Head and How it May Have Contributed to His Death

Nolan's parents and legal team will hold a Tuesday news conference

PASCAGOULA, Miss. (September 21, 2026) — Nationally renowned civil rights and personal injury attorney Ben Crump and the legal team for the family of 18-year-old Nolan Xavier Wells said Jackson County District Attorney Angel Myers McIlrath is attempting to close the chapter on Wells' death without getting to the bottom of what caused the blunt force trauma to the back of his head and body.

Mississippi's medical examiner found evidence of injury to Wells' head early in the investigation. Later, the independent autopsy conducted for the family by forensic pathologist Dr. Roger A. Mitchell Jr., found that Nolan "sustained recent unexplained blunt-force injuries to the back of the head and additional areas of his back." Dr. Mitchell wrote that the red discoloration noted in his preliminary findings was confirmed as blood and reported as two contusions by the original Mississippi pathologist. The cause of those injuries and their contribution to Nolan's death remain unexplained. The state medical examiner neglected to take photographs of the back of Nolan's head.

The grand jury found that "the position of, the condition of, time of discovery, and location of Mr. Wells' body is consistent with drowning." However, both the state of Mississippi's medical examiner and Dr. Mitchell opined that the cause and manner of Mr. Wells' death is undetermined and that drowning is a diagnosis of exclusion. Dr. Mitchell explained that all other causes must be ruled out prior to certifying a death as drowning. The death certificate also concluded that the cause and manner of death is undetermined, not drowning.

Dr. Mitchell concluded that an undetermined cause and manner of death are the most appropriate and scientifically supportable findings, and that the investigation "should remain open and active."

The legal team is releasing Dr. Mitchell's full report and requests that the District Attorney release the full autopsy report from the state's medical examiner. The legal team is also calling on the District Attorney's office to keep the investigation open and active and to release the investigative file. The family is also renewing its request that the U.S. Department of Justice open the independent federal review sought by the Congressional Black Caucus in August. The forensic experts will address the complete examination of Nolan's cell phone in the days ahead, specifically, his social media apps that were not part of the preliminary investigation.

Attorney Crump released the following statement:

"Today, the State of Mississippi is attempting to close the chapter on Nolan Wells' death without getting to the truth.

"Mississippi's own pathologist found two bruises on the back of this young man's head and informed investigators of them early in this investigation. An independent autopsy documented traces of blood and recent blunt-force injuries to the back of Nolan's head and his back. To this day, not one person has explained how they got there.

"Dr. Mitchell also wrote that the record does not establish whether Nolan entered the water on his own or was forced, or whether he was conscious when he went in. We don't know how Nolan died, and neither does the State of Mississippi. Mississippi must keep investigating, and if it will not pursue this to the end, the Department of Justice should.

"We are releasing the final independent autopsy report in its entirety, so everyone can read it for themselves. This grand jury result leaves us with more questions than answers. Nolan's family will not rest until we know what happened to him, and neither will we."

WHO:

Family of Nolan Wells
Attorney Ben Crump
Attorney Liza Park
Attorney Eric Hertz
Attorney Kristen Clarke

WHEN:

Tuesday, September 22, 2026
12 pm ET

WHERE:

New Birth Missionary Baptist Church
6400 Woodrow Rd
Stonecrest, GA 30038