

# Court date set for lawsuit against Patterson and seminary

January 31, 2023

Four years after the lawsuit was filed, a court date finally is set for the civil case involving former Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary President Paige Patterson's handling of a sexual abuse complaint.

U.S. District Judge Sean Jordan [set the trial date for April 3](#) at the U.S. Courthouse in Plano, with a final pretrial conference scheduled March 31.

*Jane Roe v. Leighton Paige Patterson et al* initially was filed March 12, 2019. However, it faced repeated delays and failed motions to dismiss the case.



Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary trustee chairman Kevin Ueckert (left) addresses trustees at a special called meeting at the Fort Worth campus. The board met to discuss the controversy surrounding Paige Patterson (right), then president of the seminary. (File Photo by Adam

Covington/SWBTS via BP)

A former seminary student brought the suit against both Patterson and the seminary that [removed him from the presidency](#) in May 2018—in part over his perceived disrespect toward women. The lawsuit alleges negligence, violation of privacy and liability.

In dismissing Patterson, trustees focused on [similar accusations he mishandled sexual abuse claims](#) at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in North Carolina when he was president there.

A former seminary student and student-employee at Southwestern Seminary—identified by the pseudonym “Jane Roe” in the lawsuit—[alleged she was raped at gunpoint](#) on more than one occasion by another student-employee who had a violent past and extensive criminal history.

The female student alleged she was stalked, violently assaulted and sexually abused by the male student, who was employed by the seminary as a plumber and had access to her on-campus residence.

She asserted the student who assaulted her met personally with Patterson to assure him his past conduct—including sexual molestation when he was a minor—would not preclude his service as a Baptist minister. Patterson allegedly encouraged him to “fish” the pool of unmarried female students for a prospective wife.

The male student eventually was expelled—not for the assault, but for violating the seminary policy regarding the possession of firearms on campus.

The suit states that prior to an October 2015 meeting she arranged with Patterson, John Nichols, chief of campus security, asked if the seminary president wanted him to attend that meeting. According to the suit, Patterson replied in an email, “I have to break her down and I may need no

official types there, but let me see.”

The suit stated the female student was afraid to pursue charges against the male student who raped her “because he had been armed and threatened Roe and her family with violence.”

While neither Patterson nor the seminary denied sexual assaults occurred, they disputed allegations in the lawsuit regarding the student’s interactions with Patterson and other seminary officials.

In his court response, Patterson stated he “was not a cause, the cause, the sole cause, a proximate cause, the sole proximate cause, or a contributing cause of any injuries or damages claimed by Roe.”