

Pressler a ‘monster’ and a ‘predator,’ SBC attorney tweets

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In a series of social media posts, the attorney who has represented the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee the past two years described Paul Pressler as “[a monster](#)” and a “[dangerous predator who exploited boys](#).”



Paul Pressler (File Photo)

Pressler—a retired judge and one of the architects of the so-called “conservative resurgence” in the convention—has been accused of molesting young men for decades but repeatedly has denied any wrongdoing.

Posting on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, Dallas attorney Gene Besen wrote of Pressler, “The man’s actions are of the devil.”

Besen wrote in response to a tweet by journalist Robert Downen that

prompted a string of tweets by pastor Marshall Blalock, a leader of the SBC's sexual abuse implementation task force.

When he worked for the *Houston Chronicle*, Downen was involved in the "[Abuse of Faith](#)" series of investigative articles that exposed widespread sexual abuse in the SBC and led to the creation of the convention's initial sexual abuse task force.

Now a reporter for [The Texas Tribune](#), Downen [posted a portion of a letter](#) from longtime SBC attorney Jim Guenther Jan. 19. In the letter, Guenther acknowledged "a reluctance on all the defendants' part to engage in discovery because we believed it would have produced a lot of evidence of the truthfulness of the fundamental allegation by the plaintiff that Pressler had sexually abused him for many years."

In late December, the SBC [settled a lawsuit](#) against Pressler. The suit, brought by Pressler's former assistant Duane Rollins, accused SBC leaders of knowing about Pressler's abuse and covering it up. Later, the legal team that represented Rollins said it had discovered "[smoking gun documents](#)" that would have proved their client's case.



Marshall Blalock, pastor of First Baptist Church of Charleston, S.C., and a leader of the Southern Baptist Convention's abuse reform implementation task force, presents

the group's report to messengers at the annual meeting in New Orleans.
(BP Photo / Sonya Singh)

In response to Downen's post of Guenther's letter, Marshall Blalock, pastor of First Baptist Church of Charleston, S.C., [tweeted](#): "This is the problem. SBC lawyers knew the abuse was happening, knew one of their 'leaders' was grossly corrupt, but chose to ignore truth and defend evil. Then they cravenly hid their complicity from the Task Force in spite of being clearly ordered to disclose everything."

Blalock continued, "When an organization makes protecting monetary assets its supreme legal standard, the path toward corruption is certain and the momentum is difficult to reverse."

Besen noted he had "never tweeted about SBC matters" previously, but he responded to Blalock's tweet and the many comments it elicited—particularly suggestions the SBC withheld important evidence.

Nothing withheld, attorney insists

"Nothing was withheld from Guidepost," the firm that conducted the internal investigation of the SBC Executive Committee's handling of sexual abuse accusations, Besen stated.

He added Guidepost "looked extensively for evidence that the Executive Committee had prior knowledge of Pressler's alleged abuse before Rollins' lawsuit and the Houston Chronicle reporting. What they found is contained in their report. Nothing was withheld from Guidepost."

Besen continued: "Everyone was publicly aware of allegations of abuse against Pressler after the Houston Chronicle began publishing stories about the Rollins lawsuit and its Abuse of Faith series. Accordingly, the

Executive Committee’s lawyers crafting the Executive Committee’s legal defense with extensive public allegations in mind is not remarkable. Again, nothing was hidden.

“Indeed, Rollins testified in discovery that he never attended an SBC church, an SBC meeting, an EC meeting, or any other SBC function. That doesn’t change the fact that Pressler is a monster, but it does impact why and how the SBC might defend the litigation and craft a legal strategy.”

In what appeared to be a hastily typed tweet, Besen concluded: “If what you want to hear is that Pressler is a dangerous predator who exploited boys based on his power and his false piety — I wholeheartedly agree. The man’s actions are of the devil. That is clear.”

[Baptist Press reported](#) Jan. 22 SBC attorney Scarlett Nokes said: “Guidepost had unfettered access to the Executive Committee’s servers during the investigation. Nothing on the servers, including the email at issue, was withheld.”

Blalock told Baptist Press he had learned that the email from Guenther was not “officially hidden” from investigators, though it was “buried in a voluminous cache of documents.”

“I would have preferred that the EC would have made us aware of the exchange because of its importance,” Blalock said.

“Now, though, I hope this will propel us to get this right moving forward. I would hate for this to hinder the important work of the ARITF. I am hopeful the recommendations they are working on will be a path forward that all of us can join as we help make our SBC churches the safest places on earth.”