

[DO NOT PUBLISH]

IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE ELEVENTH CIRCUIT

---

No. 15-10452  
Non-Argument Calendar

---

D.C. Docket No. 4:13-cv-00611-RH-CAS

JEFFREY POPE,

Plaintiff - Appellee,

versus

BIG BEND CARES INC.,  
ROB RENZI,

Defendants - Appellants.

---

Appeal from the United States District Court  
for the Northern District of Florida

---

(November 4, 2015)

Before MARCUS, WILSON, and WILLIAM PRYOR, Circuit Judges.

PER CURIAM:

Jeffrey Pope is an activist and advocate for the HIV/AIDS community in the Tallahassee region of Florida. When Pope's activities angered Robert Renzi, a Director of Big Bend Cares, Inc., Renzi publicly and falsely told people in the HIV/AIDS community that he had acquired a restraining order against Pope and that Pope violated the restraining order. Worried that Renzi's statements injured Pope in his avocation of working in the community of HIV and AIDS volunteers and organizations, Pope filed suit against Renzi and Big Bend, which proceeded to a trial by jury. At trial, Pope prevailed on his defamation claim, and the jury awarded him \$12,500.00 in punitive damages from each defendant for a total of \$25,000.00. Although the jury awarded no compensatory damages, the special interrogatory verdict form stated that Renzi's statements tended to expose Pope to hatred, ridicule or contempt, or to injure his reputation, and that the statements were made without a good motive. Renzi and Big Bend then filed this appeal, and contending that: (1) the district court erred by denying their motion for summary judgment and motion for judgment as a matter of law because the statements at issue do not constitute defamation and are privileged; (2) the district court abused its discretion at trial by admitting evidence of prior bickering between the parties; (3) the district court erred by failing to reduce the punitive damages award given the absence of express malice and the absence of an award of compensatory

damages; and (4) the district court erred by failing to award attorney's fees or sanctions for claims that were previously dismissed or abandoned.

Having reviewed the record and considered the facts and legal arguments presented by the parties in their briefs, we find no error as to any of the issues presented for our review. Accordingly, we affirm the district court in all respects related to this appeal.

**AFFIRMED.**