

**COUNTY OF SUFFOLK
DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE**



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Indictment charges Sunrise Highway wrong way driver with murder by depraved indifference

A 54 year old Port Jefferson Station man pleaded not guilty today to murder in the second degree and other charges in an indictment unsealed in Central Islip, Suffolk County District Attorney Thomas Spota said.

State Supreme Court Justice Fernando Camacho remanded Christopher O'Brien to the Suffolk County Jail. O'Brien was driving the wrong way – eastbound in the westbound lanes of Sunrise Highway – early on the morning of December 23 of last year. O'Brien struck a Toyota Corolla head-on, killing the driver, Thomas D'Eletto, 57, of Aquebogue.

In addition to the second degree murder "by depraved indifference" count, the indictment also charges O'Brien with aggravated vehicular homicide, manslaughter in the second degree, vehicular manslaughter in the second degree, reckless endangerment in the first degree, aggravated driving while intoxicated, driving while intoxicated, driving while ability impaired by a drug, driving while ability impaired by the combined influence of alcohol; and a drug and reckless driving.

"At the scene, police observed that O'Brien was unsteady on his feet, had bloodshot, glassy eyes, and was slurring his words, and he gave oral admissions to the police about drinking and driving," District Attorney Spota said.

Police charged O'Brien at the scene with driving while intoxicated. His blood, drawn approximately two hours after the crash, had a blood-alcohol content of .17 and also showed the presence of cocaine.

"Another motorist saw O'Brien approximately 20 minutes prior to the fatal crash when the defendant drove into oncoming traffic three times while driving north of the Long Island Expressway," said DA Spota. "Then on Sunrise Highway, several drivers reported to police they had to go onto the median or the shoulder of the road to avoid a collision with O'Brien."

Justice Camacho set a return date of April 4.



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A criminal charge is an accusation. A defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty in a court of law.