

‘Vicious Piece of Scum’: Connecticut Lawyer Getting Hate Mail for Defending Fotis Dulos

New Haven-based attorney Norm Pattis is once again in the media spotlight with his representation of Fotis Dulos, the estranged husband of Jennifer Dulos, a mother of five who went missing 20 days ago.

By Robert Storace



Norm Pattis

New Haven attorney, blogger and author Norm Pattis is no stranger to high-profile controversial cases.

His clients include right-wing radio host and conspiracy theorist Alex Jones, shut out of social media platforms

for alleged hate speech and for propagating rumors that the Sandy Hook mass school shooting was a hoax.

But Pattis' latest case, which has again made national headlines, has brought new vitriol.

“Anytime a spouse or estranged spouse is the victim of violence or is missing, obviously the suspect is their partner,” he said. “I don’t fault police for looking at Mr. Dulos. ... But everyday they attempt to link Mr. Dulos to the crime and fail, it tends to be more of a statement to his innocence.”

— Norm Pattis
Defense Attorney

The criminal defense attorney represents Fotis Dulos, charged in the disappearance of his estranged wife Jennifer, last seen May 24 when she dropped her five children at the New Canaan Country School.

In the six days since he's accepted the case, Pattis said he's fielded at least 15 hate-filled emails.

"They are calling me a vicious piece of scum," he said.

But those who know him say Pattis is a ferocious fighter for his clients, and that Dulos has one of the best criminal defense attorneys in the region.

"He's refreshingly unorthodox. He is willing to go out on a limb, far out on a limb, for his case," said longtime New Haven attorney Hugh Keefe, a partner with Lynch, Traub, Keefe & Errante. "He is very passionate and he's in the tradition of the famed Bill Kunstler. He does not feel it's his job to make the prosecutor or judge feel good."

'I WILL NOT LEAVE THEM'

The defense counsel is principal in The Pattis & Smith Law Firm and a veteran of more than 100 jury trials, according to his website. A frequent public speaker and prolific blogger, he also worked with famed attorney Gerry Spence's Trial Lawyers College in Wyoming and was a faculty member for the National Institute for Trial

Advocacy.

But Pattis says his personal history shaped his outlook as a litigator.

"I am drawn to cases where the defendant was hated," he said. "I was abandoned by my father when I was 8-years-old as a child. I am committed to my clients and I will not leave them alone. I will fight for them."

In an interview Thursday morning, the attorney warned against jumping to conclusions against his client.

"Anytime a spouse or estranged spouse is the victim of violence or is missing, obviously the suspect is their partner," he said. "I don't fault police for looking at Mr. Dulos. ... But everyday they attempt to link Mr. Dulos to the crime and fail, it tends to be more of a statement to his innocence."

But prosecutors said investigators found Dulos' DNA in a mix of the missing woman's blood in her New Canaan home, according to CBSN New York.

Dulos and his girlfriend, Michelle Troconis, each pleaded not guilty Tuesday to charges of tampering with evidence and hindering prosecution.

Pattis has asked for an August trial date. ■