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Trout Point figure fingered for expensive vacations on public's dime

Aaron Broussard, the central **figure** in both a wide-ranging corruption scandal in New Orleans and a series of court cases in distant Nova Scotia, appears to heading for additional legal troubles after a former senior official in his Jefferson Parish administration pled guilty to misprision of a felony and failing to report crimes related to a series of frauds.

In addition to the underlying payroll scandal, Broussard is also accused of using taxpayer funds to finance luxury **vacations** and of forcing employees to funnel lucrative contracts to friends and associates.

Broussard was a high-flying political kingpin in the New Orleans area and has also been the central **figure** in several law suits brought by the owners of the luxury, Tusket River eco-vacation property, **Trout Point** Lodge. Lodge owners Charles Lea and Vaughn Perret filed defamation claims against the Times-Picayune newspaper, two New Orleans TV stations and news blog Slabbed, which specializes in New Orleans political corruption. Broussard's wife has also pled guilty in the frauds and has cooperated with prosecutors.

All of the media sources had asserted or insinuated that Broussard was part owner of **Trout Point** Lodge, allegations which were vigorously denied by Leary, Perret and the firm which owns the Lodge. Documents filed with the courts and Nova Scotia and Louisiana government agencies show that Broussard and various business partners owned properties and businesses in the **Trout Point** Road area adjacent to the Lodge and that the Lodge acted as a rental agent for Broussard's properties.

Broussard and his New Orleans political friends were often guests at the Lodge, but there were no records produced in court which showed any ownership.

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The beleaguered former politician visited Nova Scotia frequently, joining Perret and Leary as directors of a non-profit organization attempting to build a hiking trail near the Lodge and Broussard's properties and was reported to have accompanied the pair on a visit to Shelburne, where he was introduced as a "silent partner" in plans by the pair to convert the former Cox Warehouse into a whiskey brewery. One local official recalls the silent partner telling her that Shelburne was a nice town but "not ready for the likes of him."

Broussard has recently asked the court to approve a delay in his trial due to recent cancer diagnosis. The judge has asked to see a copy of Broussard's treatment schedule before agreeing to any delay.

The Times-Picayune eventually printed retractions for their claims about Broussard ownership in the Lodge and the Fox 8 TV station, according to a news release from **Trout Point** Lodge, broadcast a clarification of their original story. The Slabbed blog was found guilty earlier this year in a suit in which Leary and Perret were awarded a judgment of more than \$400,000.

It is expected that subsequent lawsuits in Mississippi involving the enforcement of the Nova Scotia judgment could take several years. Slabbed publisher Doug Handshoe told SCT that he expects to win his suit in the U.S.A. under the provisions of the recently-enacted Free Speech Act, which protects Americans from foreign defamation judgment where litigants can be shown to have been practicing "libel tourism."

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