

PRESS RELEASE

Baker Donelson and Huie Fernambucq Attorneys Secure Defense Win for Ford Motor Company

March 20, 2012

(Jackson, MS / March 20, 2012) Attorneys Barry W. Ford, Walker W. "Bill" Jones and Sterling Kidd of Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, PC, and Gordon Sproule and Patrick Strubel of Huie, Fernambucq & Stewart, LLP, successfully defended Ford Motor Company in litigation claiming that design defects led to injuries resulting from an accident involving a Ford vehicle. Mike Wallace of Wise Carter Child & Caraway, P.A. attended as appellate counsel.

On March 2, after a 21-day trial before the Hon. Carlton Reeves, the jury deliberated for two and a half hours before returning a verdict denying the plaintiffs' claims of design defects.

The plaintiffs in the case, Marion Hankins and her parents Peggy and James Hankins, sought \$15.1 million in damages—which did not include punitive damages, as the jury never had occasion to consider such damages—from Ford Motor Company after Marion Hankins was injured in an accident that occurred in Jackson, Mississippi on October 19, 2005. Marion Hankins was driving a 2000 Ford Expedition, when the vehicle ran off the road and began to roll. During the rollover, Ms. Hankins was ejected through the vehicle's sunroof and suffered injuries, rendering her a paraplegic. The plaintiffs alleged that the sunroof was defectively designed and that it was because of the defective design that Ms. Hankins was ejected from the vehicle and thus paralyzed.

"We were able to show that Ms. Hankins was not wearing her seatbelt and that the design of the sunroof was not the cause of her injuries," said Bill Jones. "While Ms. Hankins's injuries are tragic, we believe the jury delivered an appropriate verdict that was based on the facts of the case, which clearly demonstrated that there were no design defects involved."