Case Law Research

Problem One

Bruce Green, a resident of Missouri and an attorney licensed in the state of Missouri, recently won an acquittal for his client in a highly publicized murder trial. After the trial was over members of the press asked Bruce's opposing counsel, Assistant District Attorney Nate Crawford, what he thought about the outcome of the trial. Mr. Crawford said, “Mr. Green is a stupid, dishonest lawyer. This acquittal was a shady deal.” Green would like to bring a civil suit against Crawford. Wisely deciding not to represent himself, Green has asked our firm to represent him. Green wants to know whether he can sustain a civil cause of action against Crawford.

1. What jurisdiction's law applies?

2. List all digest series that contain that jurisdiction's law:

3. Which digest series should you use to get the narrowest selection of recent cases on point?

4. What is the title of the specific volume(s), within the digest series you selected, you will utilize to begin your research?

5. List descriptive words and facts you will use in your search for on point case authority.

6. Using the correct volumes of the digest series, list the topic(s) and key number(s) you find when utilizing the descriptive words and facts from question 5.
7. Update the Descriptive Word Index. List your step(s).

8. What topic(s) and key number(s) appear the most promising to locate on point case law?

Utilizing the topic(s) and key number(s) from question 8, find the applicable case headnote(s) in the digest and read it (them). **HINT: Before looking up the topic(s) and key number(s), it may be helpful to look at the outlines that appear before each topic within the specific digest volume(s).**

9. List the full case citation(s) that appear(s) most helpful to resolving your research question. (Use proper citation form.) You may need to look up the case in the print reporter to get all the information you need for the citation.

Sign on to WestlawNext. Your goal is to look up this promising case from question 9 and then to be sure you have located the most current cases on that point of law.

Enter the citation in the search box. Scroll through the case until you find the list of headnotes. While the topics are listed, the key numbers are hidden. Click on the key symbol to uncover the key numbers. Locate the headnote that contains the topic and key number that you used to first locate the case in the digest.

10. What headnote(s) includes the topic and key number that appears to resolve your research question?

11. Review the text of the case. What advice would you give our client, Green, in this instance?
Now, you need to update your search for headnotes on this same point of law on WestlawNext. Click on the key symbol of the headnote in the case you found in question 9. Then click on the key number itself.

12. Are there any more recent Missouri cases that use this same topic and key number? If yes, give the case citation in proper form.

**USING THE SAME FACTS AND STARTING ON THE SCREEN FROM QUESTION 12, RESOLVE THIS ISSUE ASSUMING GREEN IS A RESIDENT AND LICENSED ATTORNEY IN MONTANA.**

13. Now what jurisdiction’s law applies?

Click on “Change” next to the listing of the jurisdiction. Erase Missouri as the jurisdiction and click on the new jurisdiction. Be sure to uncheck “Related Federal” if the default automatically includes it. Then, click “Apply.”

14. After reviewing all applicable headnotes, list the full case citation that appears most helpful to resolving your research question. (Use proper citation form.) You may need to click on the case name to open the opinion to get all the information for the citation. You will first be sent to the headnotes. Scroll up to the caption to get the needed information.

15. Review the text of the case. What advice would you give our client, Green, in this instance?