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Parker Man Sentenced to 15 years in Bizarre Attempted Murder Case

Elbert County, CO – September 19, 2025. A Parker man has been sentenced to 15 years in prison following a violent attack on a longtime friend.

49-year-old Richard Szabelski was sentenced by Elbert County District Judge Theresa Slade after pleading guilty to Second Degree Assault as a Crime of Violence, and DUI. The charges stem from a July 2024 incident in Elizabeth, Colorado, where Szabelski tried to shoot 48-year-old Rodney Hicks.

The events unfolded after Szabelski and his wife attended a concert at Red Rocks with Hicks and Hicks' teenaged son. During the event, Hicks allegedly made an inappropriate gesture toward Szabelski's wife. Later that night, Hicks and his family were awakened by gunshots outside their home in rural Elbert County.

According to investigators, Hicks and his son confronted Szabelski outside the home, where he was armed with a handgun. Szabelski attempted to fire at Hicks, but the gun jammed. He then struck Hicks in the face and said "he was lucky" the gun jammed. Szabelski then drove off and was later arrested. Toxicology reports showed marijuana and alcohol in his system at the time of the attack.

"This was not just an act of violence- it was a betrayal," said Chief Deputy District Attorney Eva Wilson." The victim and his family were shocked and deeply traumatized by the defendant's actions, especially because he was someone they had trusted for years."

District Attorney George Brauchler praised the sentence, emphasizing the seriousness of the crime and the importance of accountability. “Shooting at people when you’re drunk and high gets you locked up here in the 23rd Judicial District,” said Brauchler. “I commend Judge Slade for sending a strong message that violence will not be tolerated in this community.”

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