

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

TO: Members, Commission on Ethics

FROM: Kerrie Stillman
Executive Director

DATE: November 20, 2025

ADVISORY OPINIONS

The Commission on Ethics issued one opinion at its November meeting and one opinion at its November meeting. It has rendered 2,717 opinions since its inception in 1974.

LITIGATION

President of Town Council Elizabeth A. Loper, elected official of the Town of Briny Breezes, et al. v. Lukis et. al., Case 1:24-cv-20604-JAL, (United States District Court Southern District of Florida).

Background

Plaintiffs are multiple elected municipal officers. They are challenging the validity of the requirement in Section 112.3144, Florida Statutes, that municipal elected officials and mayors (and candidates for such offices) must file a CE Form 6 financial disclosure. Plaintiffs' argument is that requiring these types of officers and candidates to publicly disclose the information required on the CE Form 6 violates their First Amendment rights under the United States Constitution, as it is government-compelled, content-based, non-commercial speech. Plaintiffs seek a declaration that extending the requirements in Section 112.3144 to municipal elected officials and municipal candidates is unconstitutional, an injunction against enforcing this provision of the law, and legal costs and fees.

Commission Representation

William Stafford of the Office of the Attorney General is the lead attorney representing the Commission. Gray Schafer and Steven Zuilkowski will be the Commission's points of contact with lead counsel.

Current Status

Each side filed a Motion for Summary Judgment on October 11, 2024, and all related responses were filed by November 8, 2024. No argument on the motions has been scheduled. On September 29, 2025, the Judge issued an Order Staying Case in Anticipation of Final Judgment, staying the action pending the Court's forthcoming order on the cross motions for summary judgment and closing the case for administrative and statistical purposes only.

Town of Briny Breezes, Florida et al. v. Lukis et al., Case Number 2024 CA 000283, (Fla. 2nd Circ. Ct., Leon County)

Background

Plaintiffs are multiple municipalities and elected municipal officers. They are challenging the validity of the requirement in Section 112.3144, Florida Statutes, that municipal elected officials and mayors (and candidates for such offices) must file a CE Form 6 financial disclosure. In essence, Plaintiffs' argument is that requiring municipal elected officials and municipal candidates to publicly disclose the information required on the CE Form 6 violates their right to privacy under Article II, Section 23 of the Florida Constitution. Plaintiffs claim there is no

compelling state interest that would justify having these types of officers and candidates disclose that degree of the information, and, even if there was a compelling interest, requiring these officers and candidates to file a CE Form 6 is not the least restrictive means of accomplishing that interest when the CE Form 1 is also available. Plaintiffs seek a declaration that extending the requirements in Section 112.3144 to municipal elected officials and municipal candidates is unconstitutional, an injunction against enforcing this provision of the law, and legal costs.

Commission Representation

William Stafford of the Office of the Attorney General is the lead attorney representing the Commission. Gray Schafer and Steven Zuilkowski are the Commission's points of contact with lead counsel.

Current Status

Defendants have filed a motion to dismiss and Plaintiffs have responded. We await an order on the motion. This case is on hold while the related federal case proceeds. There have been no developments since the last report through November 20, 2025.

Garcia et al. v. Stillman et al., USCA Case No. 23-12663 (11th Circuit Court of Appeals), and S.D. Fla. (1:22-CV-24156-BB)

Background

At the time the case was filed, Plaintiffs were local public officers challenging the In-Office Lobbying Ban found in Article II, Section 8(f)(2), Florida Constitution. The ban became law after the Constitutional Revision Commission proposed it in 2018 via Amendment 12, which passed with 79% of the vote. The District Court entered final judgment in favor of the Plaintiffs, finding that Article II, Section 8(f)(2), was an unconstitutional abridgment of free speech. On August 9, 2023, the District Court entered final judgment enjoining the Commission from enforcing the provision on any public officer in the State. Defendants appealed to the 11th Circuit.

Commission Representation

Nate Forrester of the Office of the Solicitor General is representing Defendants in the appeal. All briefs are filed. Emily Witthoeft of the Office of the Attorney General represents the Commission before the District Court. Steven Zuilkowski is monitoring the appeal.

Current Status

On November 30, 2023, the 11th Circuit stayed the injunction pending a final adjudication of the appeal. The stay allows continued enforcement of the In-Office Lobbying Ban against all public officers except the one named Plaintiff who had standing to challenge the ban. All briefs have been filed and oral argument on the merits of the appeal occurred on February 24, 2025. The audio of that proceeding is available at this link:

https://www.ca11.uscourts.gov/sites/default/files/oral_argument_recordings/23-12663_02262025.mp3 We now await the Court's ruling. There have been no developments since the last report through November 20, 2025.

Jonathan L. Owens v. State of Florida, Office of the Attorney General, Florida Commission on Ethics, and Division of Administrative Hearings, Case Number 2025 CA 001007, (Fla. 2nd Circ. Ct., Leon County)

Background

Plaintiff is the Respondent in Complaint No. 23-231, which, until recently, was about to be tried at DOAH by our Commission Advocate. On June 16, 2025, DOAH issued an order granting Plaintiff's/Respondent's emergency motion to stay the administrative proceedings. On June 18, 2025, the Commission and the other defendants in this case were served with the summons and verified complaint in this matter. The Plaintiff seeks a declaration that the ethics hearing at DOAH violates his First Amendment rights and that the Commission lacks jurisdiction to pursue any action against him for violating Section 112.313(8), F.S.

Commission Representation

James Waczewski of the Office of the Attorney General represents the Commission and the other defendants. Gray Schafer and Steven Zuilkowski are monitoring the case. Joseph Burns is the Commission Advocate representing the Commission at DOAH.

Current Status

On September 2, 2025, Mr. Waczewski filed a motion to dismiss the case on behalf of Defendants. A hearing on the motion has been set for November 25, 2025.

Lauren Ramirez v. Commission on Ethics, Case Number 5D2025-3173, (Fla. 5th DCA).

Background

On October 17, 2025, Appellant submitted a timely appeal of the formal opinion (CEO 25-6) the Commission issued to her after the September 12, 2025 Commission meeting.

Commission Representation

Stephanie Novenario and Steven Zuilkowski are handling the appeal.

Current Status

On November 8, 2025, Appellant's counsel communicated that Appellant has decided to withdraw her appeal and that she would file a notice to that effect imminently. On November 12, 2025, Appellant's counsel filed a Notice of Voluntary Dismissal, but, on the same day, the Court rejected the filing (did not docket) because the filing did not contain the 5DCA case number and Appellant's counsel had not included her client in the certificate of service. As of 10am on November 20, 2025, Appellant has not refiled the Notice. If Appellant does not refile, the Commission must file the index of the record by December 5, 2025, and must file the record on appeal by December 16, 2025.

Ferdell Baker v. Florida Commission on Ethics, Case Number SC2025-1748, (Florida Supreme Court)

Background

On November 6, 2025, Petitioner filed this action with the Florida Supreme Court apparently seeking a Writ of Mandamus. We have not received the Petition yet because Petitioner has not paid the filing fee. The Court set a deadline of December 8, 2025, for Petitioner to pay the fee. The Court has taken no action on the merits of the Petition. Steven Zuilkowski is monitoring the case.

Current Status

We await the payment of the filing fee or other action by the Court.

STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS AND TRAINING

Amelia spoke in Orlando, on October 30, at the Florida Bar Criminal Law Section's "Inside the Florida Legislature" annual legislative update CLE. She provided attendees with an overview of the Code of Ethics and the new stolen valor law.

On November 18, Stephanie conducted a one-hour general ethics training via videoconference for staff of the Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office, Property Appraiser's Office, and the Office of the Supervisor of Elections.

Kerrie provided two-hours of ethics training to County Commissioners on November 18, at the Institute for County Government's 2025 Ethics, Public Records, and Sunshine Law training in Tampa.

FINANCES

As of October 31, 2025, we've spent \$1,148,177.93 (37.44%) of our appropriation, with 33.33% of the FY gone.

PENDING ORDERS IMPOSING PENALTIES

GOVERNOR

Complaint No. 17-088, In re Cheryl Thomas-Hughes (Final Order 12/12/18)
Complaint No. 18-168, In re Dustin Daniels (Final Order 04/21/21)
Complaint No. 21-113, In re Dennis Ward (4-27-22)
Complaint No. 20-060,
 20-073, 20-103(Cons.), In re Douglas Underhill (Final Order Upon DCA Mandate
 4/30/2025)
Complaint No. 21-039 to 052, 21-057, 21-060, & 21-064 (Cons), In re Vanessa Baugh (2/1/2023)
Complaint No. 23-168, In re Henry Rosenthal (Final Order 4/19/2024)
Complaint No. 23-200, In re Michael Cusack (Final Order 4/19/2024)
Complaint No. 23-221, In re Ken Mascara (Final Order 7/31/2024)
Complaint No. 22-041, 22-115 (Cons.), In re Gregory Tony (3/7/2025)
Complaint No. 22-103, In re Michael Andrew White (3/7/2025)
Complaint No. 24-156, In re Bowen Kou (3/7/2025)
Complaint No. 24-172, 24-225 (Cons.), In re Lauro Diaz (3/7/2025)
Complaint No. 23-283, In re Angela McDonald (Final Order 4/25/2025)
Complaint No. 24-008, In re Kenneth Brenner (Final Order 4/25/2025)
Complaint No. 24-048, In re Ron Mueller (Final Order 4/25/2025)
Complaint No. 24-268, In re Annette Redman (6/6/2025)
Complaint No. 24-277, In re Tamara Goehler (6/6/2025)
Complaint No. 22-082, In re Vennis Gilmore (9/12/25)
Complaint No. 21-017, 21-031 (cons.), In re John Stevens (Final Order 11/19/25)

HOUSE

Complaint No. 18-026, In re Kim Daniels (Final Order 1/30/2019)

Complaint No. 20-206, In re Jackie Toledo (Final Order 10/27/2021)
Complaint No. 20-211, In re Tracie Davis (Final Order 10/27/2021)
Complaint No. 21-159, In re Tracie Davis (Final Order 6/8/2022)

SENATE

Complaint No. 18-090, In re Daphne Campbell (Final Order 3/9/2022)

**PENDING ACTION ON STATUTORILY-GENERATED LOBBYING FIRM AUDIT
MATTERS (GOVERNOR AND CABINET)**

Complaint No. 16-017, In re Dean Mead (Probable Cause 01/27/17)
Complaint No. 16-018, In re Buigas and Associates (Probable Cause 01/27/17)
Complaint No. 16-019, In re DDarling Consulting (Probable Cause 01/27/17).
Complaint No. 16-174, In re Kathy Till and Associates, Inc., (Probable Cause 08/02/17)
Complaint No. 16-170, In re Capitol Group, Inc., (Probable Cause 10/25/17)
Complaint No. 16-173, In re Johnson Strategies, LLC (Probable Cause 12/13/17)
Complaint No. 16-175, In re Sayfie Law Firm (Probable Cause 10/25/17)
Complaint No. 17-132, In re Andrew J. Liles (Probable Cause 08/01/18)
Complaint No. 17-134, In re Lester Abberger (Probable Cause 08/01/18)
Complaint No. 17-135, In re Pruitt and Associates (Probable Cause 08/01/18)
Complaint No. 17-136, In re Wilson and Associates, LLC (Probable Cause 08/01/18)
Complaint No. 17-137, In re TC Wolfe (Probable Cause 08/01/18)
Complaint No. 19-031, In re Impact GR (Probable Cause 09/18/19)
Complaint No. 20-055, In re All Florida Solutions, Inc. (Probable Cause 03/10/21)
Complaint No. 20-056, In re Carr Allison (Probable Cause 03/10/21)
Complaint No. 20-058, In re Pyle and Associates (Probable Cause 03/10/21)
Complaint No. 21-127, In re Diana Hadi Padgett (Probable Cause 12/3/21)
Complaint No. 21-128, In re CJT Strategies, LLC (Probable Cause 12/3/21)
Complaint No. 22-074, In re Capitol Strategy Group (12/2/22)
Complaint No. 22-075, In re Buchanan, Ingersoll, and Rooney (12/2/22)