



Via Interoffice Mail  
and email at [BacogC@miamidade.gov](mailto:BacogC@miamidade.gov)

**ETHICS COMMISSIONERS**

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**JOSEPH CENTORINO**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
GENERAL COUNSEL

**MICHAEL P. MURAWSKI**  
ADVOCATE

**MIRIAM S. RAMOS**  
DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL

February 21, 2013

Christina White, Deputy Supervisor of Elections  
Miami-Dade Elections Department  
2700 NW 87<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
Miami, FL 33172

Re: RQO 13-02

The County Elections Department may accept financial disclosure statements filed electronically. *See* Miami-Dade County Code at Sec. 2-11.1 (i).

Dear Ms. White:

IN A PUBLIC MEETING on February 20, 2013, the Miami-Dade Ethics Commission opined that the Elections Department may accept financial disclosure forms filed electronically—by fax, email, or other devices compatible with the Department's systems—in order to reduce County costs without sacrificing confidence in County procedures.

AS BACKGROUND, you requested that the Elections Department be allowed to accept financial disclosure forms electronically. The Elections Department receives approximately 5,500 financial disclosure forms every year, all of which are currently submitted as hard copies.

THE COUNTY ETHICS CODE requires that certain individuals not covered by financial disclosure requirements under state law file financial disclosure with the County:

All [board members] shall file, no later than 12:00 noon of July 1st of each year, including the July 1st following the last year that person is in office ... one (1) of the following:

- (a) A copy of that person's or firm's current federal income tax return; or
- (b) A current certified financial statement on a form of the type approved for use by state or national banks in Florida listing all assets and liabilities having a value in excess of one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00) and a short description of each; or
- (c) An itemized source of income statement, under oath and on a

form approved by the County for said purpose.<sup>1</sup>

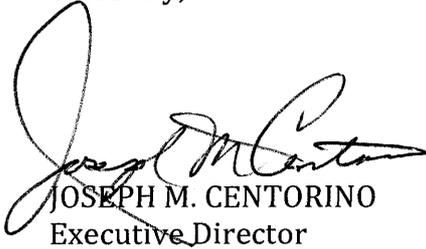
The County Ethics Code is silent as to the physical properties of the forms filed, and no County Ethics Commission opinion has addressed this issue.

The Elections Department currently uses an electronic data management system that has been certified as meeting state standards for *maintaining* forms in an electronic format.<sup>2</sup> County filers, however, *submit* forms as hard copies. Once received, Elections Department personnel scan, validate, and index the original hard copies and then destroy them. The Ethics Commission was persuaded that accepting forms electronically would not lead to increased fraud as long as the existing security standards for maintenance are followed.

CONSEQUENTLY, the Ethics Commission opined that the Elections Department may accept financial disclosure forms electronically—by fax, email, or other devices compatible with the Department's systems—provided that existing security standards are followed. The Commissioners reasoned that this would allow the County to control costs without sacrificing confidence in County procedures.

Please feel free to contact me or Victoria Frigo, Senior Staff Attorney, if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



JOSEPH M. CENTORINO  
Executive Director

copies: Penelope Townsley, Supervisor of Elections  
Carolina D. Lopez, Assistant to the Deputy Supervisor of Elections  
Carmen Bofill, Clerk 3, Elections Department

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<sup>1</sup> Miami-Dade County Code at Sec. 2-11.1 (i).

<sup>2</sup> See Fla. Stat. 257.36 (6) (2012).