

Meyers, Robert (COE)

From: Meyers, Robert (COE)
Sent: Tuesday, April 28, 2009 1:26 PM
To: Escobar, Bernardo (DIST10)
Cc: Sanchez, Gerald (CAO)
Subject: Ethics Opinions

Dear Bernardo:

I spoke to Gerald Sanchez yesterday and he conveyed a question from your office concerning the ethical issues surrounding Commissioner Souto hiring his grandson to work in his office. As I understand it, the Commissioner's grandson is fifteen years of age, he will be working in the office as a summer intern and will be paid minimum wage. Furthermore, Miami-Dade County will not be paying for his services; rather Commissioner Souto will pay his grandson out of his own pocket. Finally, another intern will also be hired by the office this summer and the Commissioner has used interns in the past.

Gerald Sanchez indicated to me that the hiring of a grandchild does not violate the state's anti-nepotism laws. Under our local ethics ordinance, the question is whether such a hiring would constitute exploitation of official position. I consulted with the chairman of the Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and we agree that Commissioner Souto would not be in violation of the county's ethics ordinance if he hires his grandson to work in his office during the summer. The reasons supporting this conclusion are twofold: 1) Commissioner Souto has used interns in the past – he is not creating a special position for his grandson and 2) Miami-Dade County taxpayers are not paying the salary of the Commissioner's grandson.

If you wish to discuss the above, do not hesitate to contact me at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Robert Meyers, Executive Director
Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust

4/28/2009