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EYE ON ETHICS

NEWSLETTER OF THE MIAMI-DADE COMMISSION ON ETHICS & PUBLIC TRUST



Issue 4 - December 2019



Director's Message

Dear Friends & Colleagues,

Quick Links

As we enjoy the end of the year holidays and prepare for the new year that comes, we find ourselves in the midst of an election season



that will kick into high gear in the upcoming months, and coming changes at your Ethics Commission.

For the Ethics Commission, new leadership comes with the recently elected new Chair and Vice Chair. Former Vice Chair Nelson C. Bellido, Miami managing partner at a statewide law firm, has taken over the helm as Chair of the Ethics Commission. He has

previously served as Commissioner, Vice Chair, and Chair. Dr. Judith Bernier, Director of FIU's Center for Labor & Research Studies, takes over as Vice Chair. Dr. Bernier has previously served as a Commissioner.

In the new year we also welcome the appointment of a new Commissioner, Wifredo "Willie" Gort. Commissioner Gort was appointed to the Ethics Commission by the Miami-Dade County League of Cities. The Ethics Commission's enabling ordinance provides that the League shall have one appointee on the Ethics Commission, in addition to two appointees by the Chief Judge of the Circuit and two rotating academic appointees from the University of Miami, Florida International University, and St. Thomas University. Commissioner Gort joins us after almost two decades of service as a Commissioner in the City of Miami, including time as acting Mayor.

The Ethics Commission will also add to its staff leadership team with the selection of a General Counsel in January. The General Counsel's position had gone unfilled for over a year and had previously been filled by the former Executive Director, who held both positions. This fiscal year we were able to work with our County budget partners to reinstate and fund the position. Our six very qualified finalists possess decades of legal experience with backgrounds in municipal, county and state government, criminal prosecution & defense, private industry, and teaching. The finalists will be interviewed by the Ethics Commission before a selection is made.

The new year brings a long-delayed move from our outdated staff offices in the Biscayne Building, just down the street from the old civil courthouse on Flagler Street, to expanded and more modern space in the County's Overtown Transit Village, North Tower. The building is located at 701 Northwest First Court, across the street from the historic Lyric Theater. We will be occupying the eight floor, east suite of the building. Our new offices will have dedicated chambers for Ethics Commission meetings and training, and should be much more usable space for the public, Ethics Commissioners, litigants, and our staff.

Please continue to read our recent start-up monthly newsletter, Eye on Ethics, and give us your welcomed suggestions regarding changes and additional recipients. Look for our revived Annual Report that will highlight this closing year's work on your behalf by the Ethics Commission. It has been many years since an annual report was issued.

Finally, in the new year, the Ethics Commission will be providing formal guidance to elected officials who solicit charitable donations and since it is election season, we will be focused on reminding incumbent and out-of-



Commissioners

Nelson C. Bellido Esq.,
Vice Chair
Dr. Judith Bernier
Judge Lawrence A.
Schwartz
Jan Jacobowitz, Esq.
Wifredo Gort

Executive Director

Jose J. Arrojo, Esq.

Advocate

Michael P. Murawski, Esq.



FAQ



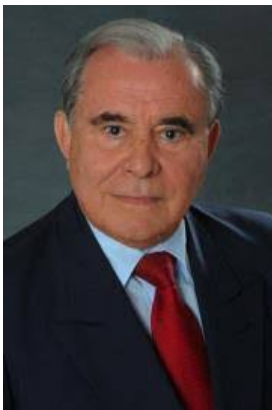
**Florida Commission
on Ethics**

office candidates that there are significant prohibitions on political campaign use of public resources, including campaigning by government staffers during their regular work hours.

Best wishes for a peaceful and joyous end of the year.

Best regards,
Jose Arrojo

New Ethics Commissioner Appointed



Former City of Miami Commissioner Wilfredo "Willy" Gort has been appointed by the Miami-Dade League of Cities as Commissioner for the Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics and Public Trust, replacing the late Jeffrey Cutler who passed away in September of this year.

Commissioner Gort is a longtime Miami-Dade County resident with almost two decades of municipal service having been elected to the City of Miami Commission two times and acting as its mayor in 1996 after the passing of then City of Miami Mayor Stephen Clark.

Before moving into the public sector, Mr. Gort worked as an investment banker for over 25 years and began his career as a manager for the United States Census Bureau in 1979. After working as Executive Director of the Little Havana Development Authority and the Downtown Miami Business Association in the early 1980s, he emerged as Vice President of Marketing for AIBC Investments in 1985, eventually becoming Chairman of their Board of Directors in 1996. Mr. Gort departed AIBC to join Ramirez & Company, serving as Senior Vice President in 1999 with oversight of public financing in the Southeastern U.S. He later served as Senior Vice President of M.F.R. Securities from 2009-2013.

Mr. Gort has been an active member of his community for decades and has served on numerous boards and committees within the City of Miami and Miami-Dade County. He is a founding member and board member of the Latin Chamber of Commerce (CAMACOL), a former President of the Miami-Dade County League of Cities and has served on the boards of the Christian Community Service Agency, the East Little Havana Development Corp., the United Way, and the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Gort is a graduate of both Miami-Dade Community College and Florida International University, holding a B.A. in Business Administration. Born in Havana, Cuba, Mr. Gort has since lived in the City of Miami with his loving wife and family.

"My many years of experience in government has allowed me to get a thorough understanding of how government works," commented Commissioner Gort. "I feel this experience is very valuable as I take on this role at the Ethics Commission."

December 2019 Ethics - Commission Meeting Actions

The Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics and Public Trust took the following actions at its monthly public meeting held on December 11, 2019.



Ethics Commission appoints a new Chair and Vice-Chair

The Ethics Commission elected Vice-Chair Nelson C. Bellido as the new Chair of the Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust. Commissioner Judith Bernier was elected and will now serve as the Vice-Chair. Chairman Bellido, replaces the late Jeffrey Cutler who served as chairman from 2017 until his unexpected passing this past September.

Ethics Commission Adopts "Bright-Line Rule" Opinion

Regarding Voting Conflicts for Elected City and County Officials

RQO 19-04: The Ethics Commission issued a formal opinion specifying the voting conflict section of the County Ethics Code imposes an automatic prohibition on an elected official's vote or participation on a matter if he or she holds a primary position with an entity that might be affected by vote. The full opinion can be found at the Ethics Commission website.

Ethics Commission Adopts Resolution Opposing the Passage of Legislation Preempting Local Government Lobbyist Ethics Training Requirements

The Ethics Commission adopted a resolution opposing Florida House Bill 611 and Florida Senate Bill 766, and other similar legislation, that would preempt local ordinances requiring local lobbyists to receive training in ethics, conflict of interest, and public meeting and records law.

Report Presented Detailing the Practice of Elected Officials Soliciting Private Donations

PI 18-44: Ethics Commission staff presented an investigative report regarding the practice of elected officials soliciting funds from private individuals or businesses to pay for community events. The Ethics Commission gave staff the go-ahead to present a proposed opinion that would limit this practice. The investigative report and accompanying ethics opinion (**INQ 19-124**) are available on the Ethics Commission website.

Ethics Commission Rejects Motion to Deny Admissibility of Evidence in Case Involving State Representative Michael Grieco

C18-17-04: The Ethics Commission denied a motion by the defense to exclude two newspaper articles as potential evidence in a case involving State Representative Michael Grieco. A status hearing is to be scheduled at the January Ethics Commission meeting to determine when to proceed with the Public Hearing on the case.

Lobbyist Rafael Garcia-Toledo Stipulates to Unregistered Lobbying Finding

C19-42-10: Lobbyist Rafael Garcia-Toledo stipulated to a Probable Cause that he engaged in unregistered lobbying of Miami-Dade County Commissioner Audrey Edmonson and agreed to pay \$500.00 in investigative costs.

Miami-Dade Public Schools Executive Recognized

At the November Ethics Commission meeting, Bob Brazofsky, Executive Director of Social Sciences for Miami-Dade County Public Schools, was recognized for his decade-long service in support of thousands of students that have participated in Ethical Governance Day, a yearly event emphasizing youth civic engagement.



"I want to thank Director Arrojo and his staff for continuing to support this initiative," commented Bob Brazofsky. "I accept this recognition on behalf of the social studies teachers who day in and day out are helping our students make sense of this world."

This year, 225 volunteers, including elected officials, lawyers, and other community leaders fanned out to over two dozen high schools and engaged with hundreds of students. Students were given a civic involvement pep talk and encouraged to engage. This year's talking points also included the importance of voting as we celebrate the soon-to-come 100th year anniversary of the 19th Amendment guaranteeing women's right to vote.



Did You Know?

Individuals who lobby in a municipality should contact the clerk's office for that municipality in order to learn that municipality's lobbying registration requirements.

Miami-Dade County Commission on
Ethics & Public Trust
Phone: 305-579-2594
Email: ethics@miamidade.gov
Website: www.ethics.miamidade.gov

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