



Craig Latimer
Supervisor of Elections

Our Vision: To be the best place in America to vote

GOVERNOR'S
STERLING
AWARD
RECIPIENT

TO: Florida Legislators
CC: Governor Ron DeSantis, Secretary of State Laurel Lee
FROM: Craig Latimer, Hillsborough County Supervisor of Elections
RE: Addressing Election Integrity Misinformation
DATE: March 14, 2022

On May 17, 2021, my office received the following public records request from Logan Churchwell, Director of Research and Original Content, Public Interest Legal Foundation (PILF), asking for specific documents:

Pursuant to the Florida Sunshine Law, I request the following sets of documentation regarding cases of potential election law violations submitted to the State's Attorney's Office for your jurisdiction.

1. *A copy of any documents or reports outlining the number of cases your office submitted to applicable state's attorney's offices particularly reflecting the period from January 1, 2019 to date.*

Because I submit potential election law violations to the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, my legal counsel responded that we had no responsive documents. That was the proper response to the question that was posed. However, without any further questioning, Mr. Churchwell published his "findings" without context or explanation. His report concluded that even if my office "catches you voting twice, lying on an application, or seeking to manipulate a neighbor's voter registration record...you will likely find safe harbor in Hillsborough County." That is completely false. **In the last five years, I've reported 14 cases to the Sheriff's Office for investigation, and more to Florida's Division of Elections.** Alarming, Mr. Churchwell's irresponsible and false conclusion has since been repeated by the Heritage Foundation and by Florida Representative Daniel Perez in his closing remarks on the new elections reform bill.

I first heard members of the public repeat Mr. Churchwell's false conclusion in early February, and I immediately sent a statement to the Secretary of State, the director of the Division of Elections, the Hillsborough County delegation and the Senate Ethics and Elections Committee to set the record straight. The statement is posted on the home page of my website, so the PILF report is not difficult to fact check. Nevertheless, Mr. Churchwell's false conclusion was repeated by Representative Perez.

We are in the midst of a difficult and dangerous cycle. My office is receiving an unusually high number of public records requests. It is becoming increasingly clear that many of those requesters are looking to support conclusions they've already drawn, so they find something they can take out of context or twist to support their beliefs. Then they tell their friends and alliances, who are susceptible to their claims because they, too, are looking to confirm their belief that elections can't be trusted. These beliefs are based on emotions, not facts.

All of Florida's elections officials are working to share accurate information about elections and caution the public about falling prey to misinformation. It is my hope that in the future our lawmakers will heed that same warning.

VoteHillsborough.gov



(813) 744 - 5900

Fred B. Karl County Center
601 E. Kennedy Blvd., 16th Floor, Tampa, FL 33602

Robert L. Gilder Elections Service Center
2514 N. Falkenburg Rd., Tampa, FL 33619

See website for regional office locations.