

April 5, 2013

The Honorable Joseph Abruzzo
222 Senate Office Building
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

Re: Concerns about OPPAGA review of Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics

Dear Senator Abruzzo:

Our independent government watchdog group Integrity Florida is deeply troubled by your request to Senate President Don Gaetz to have him direct the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) to conduct a review of the Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics.

If there was a legitimate reason for a review of the Palm Beach County Ethics Commission, then a transparent and accountable approval process should have been followed as is utilized for other OPPAGA projects initiated by the Joint Legislative Auditing Committee.

An OPPAGA review of the Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics, which was created in May 2010, would be premature for such a new entity and a massive waste of taxpayer resources. As you know, OPPAGA projects often take between 1500-2000 hours of staff time at an average rate of \$75 per staff hour plus expenses for travel and other needs. An OPPAGA review of such a small entity seems more than overkill.

In fiscal year 2011-2012, the Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics expended just eighty-eight percent of budgeted expenditures, a savings of four percentage points over projected savings, a savings of approximately \$70,000 to taxpayers. In 2011, the National Association of Counties presented its Achievement Award to Palm Beach County for its sweeping ethics reform measures. With just five full-time staff and a budget of approximately \$500,000, the Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics has delivered significant results and earned a reputation for honesty, integrity and character.

We understand that your request for the review of Palm Beach County's Ethics Commission came less than a week after your legislative assistant, Philip Massa, failed to get the Ethics Commission's executive director job. Your financial disclosures indicate that you work for a law firm that represents the City of Boca Raton as a client, an entity under the jurisdiction of the Palm Beach County Ethics Commission.

We respectfully request that you petition President Gaetz to withdraw his directive for an OPPAGA review of the Palm Beach County Ethics Commission, which would likely save Florida taxpayers thousands of dollars and increase public trust.

Sincerely,



Dan Krassner
Executive Director
Integrity Florida