

# **FLORIDA ETHICS COMMISSION CLOSES CASE AGAINST SHERIFF ISRAEL**

## **VOTES TO TAKE NO ACTION ON COMPLAINT FILED BY DISGRUNTLED FORMER BSO EMPLOYEE**

The Florida Ethics Commission ended all legal proceedings against Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel related to a complaint filed last year by disgruntled former BSO civilian employee Sam Frusterio. "I feel relieved the entire case was closed by the Commission without even having to go through a trial," said Sheriff Israel. "I said from the beginning that I followed the law and acted correctly at all times, and this official outcome vindicates my prior statements."

The Commission met in Tallahassee and voted to declare the complaint closed and "will take no further action." The formal written ruling was released Wednesday afternoon. "I wasn't permitted to discuss the hearing publicly until today, under Commission rules, but now that the matter is closed I can finally comment and thank the Commission for its decision," said the Sheriff.

The Commission clearly believed there were insufficient facts to take the case any further based upon their closed / "no further action" ruling. "This was a real victory for Sheriff Israel," said attorney Ron Meyer, who represented the Sheriff. Meyer is also widely recognized as one of Florida's top ethics attorneys. "The Sheriff should rightly feel fully exonerated under this favorable ruling."

The complaint related to a brief vacation the Sheriff and his family took with Robert Pereira, a family friend, before the Sheriff took office. The Israels and the Pereiras, along with a third family, enjoyed a trip on Mr. Pereira's boat. The complaint also related to the Sheriff's attendance at one of Mr. Pereira's 2012 holiday parties. The Commission staff report agreed that Mr. Pereira was merely a family friend who does no business with BSO.

"I am glad to get this case behind me. Now I can fully focus on the things that really matter to residents, like continuing to make Broward safer," said the Sheriff. Broward property and violent crime rates are sharply down since Sheriff Israel took office in January 2013.

Frusterio was once a civilian BSO manager in the finance department in the early 1990s under the late Sheriff Nick Navarro, but was fired by the late Sheriff Ron Cochran in 1993. Frusterio has repeatedly and unsuccessfully sought to return to BSO since then. Although he had once supported Sheriff Israel in the 2008 election, he switched sides and backed former Sheriff Al Lamberti in 2012 in the hopes of securing a job. When Lamberti lost, Frusterio begged Israel for a job on three separate occasions. When Israel did not hire him, Frusterio filed the now-rejected ethics complaint.

\* \* \*