

Florida Civil Rights Association

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FLORIDA CIVIL RIGHTS ASSOCIATION TELLS ORLANDO POLICE CHIEF TO END POLICY EXEMPTING OFFICERS FROM GETTING TRAFFIC TICKETS

An Orange County deputy not ticketed for running a red light, caused a 4-car crash that injured 5 sends the wrong message

ORLANDO , FL – The Florida Civil Rights Association is sending a letter today to Orlando Police Chief Val Demings asking the Chief to immediately end a long standing policy not to ticket police officers who are at fault for traffic crashes within the City of Orlando .

The no ticket policy is illegal on its face, conflicts with State Uniform Traffic Laws and violates the Equal Protection Clause of the US Constitution, said J Willie David, III, President of the Florida Civil Rights Association. Not to enforce the law against Orange County deputy Scott Stephenson sends the wrong message, creates distrust between the public and the police, and victimize the crash victims all over again, David said.

Deputy Stephenson violated state uniform traffic laws when he carelessly ran a red light in his marked patrol vehicle causing a four (4) car-crash that injured five (5), including himself. Had the FHP responded and investigated the crash - the deputy would have received a ticket for violating the law, David said. Recently, FHP ticketed Orange County Deputy John Savaiinaea for careless driving, causing a three (3) vehicle accident.

In a **2003 case**, a Hillsborough County deputy ran a red light and caused the **wife of an attorney** to crash and **was not ticketed**. The crash resulted in **\$20,000** in medical bills for the victim. The judge ordered the Sheriff's department to **stop implementing the practice and ruled the policy not to ticket police officers who caused traffic crashes illegal**.

Hillsborough County Sherriff's Office says rather than ticketing deputies, it conducts an **internal review** of traffic violations. In most cases the punishment is more severe than a ticket. Sadly in **2009** Orlando Police Chief used the same statement to explain why Orlando Police was upholding its illegal policy.

In 2003 Tampa Police Chief Stephen Hogue says though it is not official department policy to exempt officers from traffic tickets, it is a tradition in the culture of law enforcement.

The Florida Civil Rights Association has communicated with Matthew Jowanna, the Attorney who filed the 2003 lawsuit against Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office over the illegal no-ticket policy. The Florida Civil Rights Association said it is time to end this tradition.

The Florida Civil Rights Association is giving the Orlando Police Chief an opportunity to **strike down** the current **no-ticket policy** before taking legal action.

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Related News Articles:

Judge says Hillsborough County deputies can be ticketed

Monday, November 10, 2003

<http://www.baynews9.com/content/36/2003/11/10/27536.html>

Week in review

Times Staff Writer

Published November 16, 2003

JUDGE REJECTS NO-TICKET POLICY: Hillsborough Circuit Judge William Levens on Monday **declared unconstitutional** a Hillsborough County Sheriff's **Office policy against ticketing** law officers who run red lights or stop signs.

Attorney Matthew Jowanna of Tampa Palms is suing the Sheriff's Office on behalf of his wife, Camille, who claims sheriff's Deputy Preston Hollis ran her car off the road by driving through a red light on Aug. 6, 2002, at Bruce B. Downs Boulevard and Amberly Drive.

Jowanna said his wife smashed into a curb, incurring about \$20,000 in medical bills because of neck and back problems. During the lawsuit, he said, he learned the Sheriff's Office had a practice of not issuing tickets to on-duty law officers who ran traffic signs or committed other civil traffic violations.

"The bottom line is, when you treat deputies different from citizens, it's a violation of equal protection," Jowanna said.

Sheriff's spokesman Lt. Rod Reder said deputies involved in crashes must face a crash review board anyway, with possible discipline that includes taking away a deputy's car, so it would be redundant to ticket them.

Reder said the judge has stayed his decision pending the outcome of the Sheriff's Office's planned appeal. "The majority of police agencies in the state have the same policy," Reder said.