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## Ramirez asks State Attorney to cede jurisdiction to Federal Agency

*Ramirez believes State Attorney's relationship may lead to a lesser charge for Robert Waechter*

**Sarasota— December 10, 2013** — Lourdes Ramirez requests the State Attorney's office to cede the jurisdiction of the Robert Waechter case to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Robert Waechter was arrested on December 14, 2012 on a charge of felony identity theft. The case involved a purchase of a debit card to make illegal political donations in Lourdes Ramirez' name to two political campaigns in October 2012. A \$200 donation was made to Keith Fitzgerald who was running against Vern Buchanan for Congress. A second donation of \$35 was made to Liz Alpert who ran against Ray Pilon for Florida House of Representatives. "When Bob Waechter was arrested in December 2012, I believed it would be difficult to prosecute this case in the Sarasota area due to his many political connections including with the State Attorney's office. I expressed this concern with State Attorney Ed Brodsky who had just entered office in early 2013. Brodsky assured me that although he is friendly with Bob Waechter, who also may have helped his campaign, he assigned a Manatee prosecutor, Asst. State Attorney Brian Iten, to prosecute the case to keep it out of Sarasota. At that time, I suggested having the FBI handle the case but was informed by the state that the federal agency would not handle a small case such as a \$200 illegal donation to a federal campaign (Keith Fitzgerald campaign)." Note: The additional illegal donation of \$250 to a federal campaign, the Obama Victory Fund, was not revealed until later in the investigation. Bob Waechter was formally charged by the State of Florida on January 31, 2013. "Over the summer, I became concerned with the various delays of the Waechter trial and started to ask questions of the State Attorney's office. I met with Asst. State Attorney Brian Iten to get an update in September 2013. Mr. Iten informed me the State planned to change the charge from felony illegal

identity theft to a much clearer charge of felony illegal donation to two or more political campaigns (Chapter 106.08 (5)(a)) and a misdemeanor identity theft for the purpose of harassment. I preferred two felony charges (illegal donations and identity theft) but was advised State Attorney would not pursue two felony charges. I was assured the state would not settle for a misdemeanor charge at that time.”

“Subsequently, I decided to meet with FBI Special Agent Thomas Baugher to discuss the case. I met with Mr. Baugher at the Asst. U.S. Attorney’s office in Tampa on November 22, 2013. The FBI has shown interest in the case.

On December 2, 2013, I met with State Attorney’s Ed Brodsky and Asst. State Attorney Brian Iten, to discuss the case. It was at this time, they advised me the state is considering allowing Mr. Waechter to plead to the misdemeanor charge of illegal identity theft for the purpose of harassment only. Although I informed Mr. Brodsky of my discussions with the FBI, he urged me to support the state’s position and gave me a few days to consider it.

On December 6, 2013, the FBI informed me that they were interested in taking on the case and had begun discussion with the State Attorney’s office to transfer the case to their office.

Today, I was informed Mr. Brodsky refused to cede jurisdiction to the FBI.

I am urging the State Attorney’s office to transfer the case to the FBI since Mr. Brodsky admits having a relationship with Mr. Waechter. Mr. Waechter has contributed to his campaign and may have also helped in campaigning for Mr. Brodsky. To ensure the impartiality of the State Attorney’s office, Mr. Brodsky should cede jurisdiction to the FBI.

In addition, Mr. Waechter has not demonstrated remorse for his actions. In the civil charge of illegal donation to a campaign by the State of Florida Elections Commission (Case No.: FEC13-002), Mr. Waechter agreed to a consent order which did not ‘constitute an admission of against interest or acknowledgement of guilt as to any

criminal charge...’. On the Federal Elections Commission settlement (also a civil charge), Mr. Waechter’s attorney advised that he ‘asserts that the violation was ‘*de minimis*’ (defined by Merriam Webster dictionary as ‘lacking significance or importance : so minor as to merit disregard’). Based on these actions, it would seem Mr. Waechter does not recognize the severity of the crime he committed.

The FBI’s review of the case will provide assurance that an agency without personal involvement with Mr. Waechter can objectively prosecute the case. I urge the State Attorney, Mr. Ed Brodsky, to reconsider his position and allow the FBI to take over the case.”