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**Office of the Inspector General
Miami-Dade County**

Memorandum

To: The Hon. Alex Penelas, Mayor

The Hon. Chairperson Barbara Carey-Shuler, Ed. D.
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

From: Christopher Mazzella
Inspector General

Date: October 16, 2004

Re: Campaign Finance Irregularities

The attached Media Advisory issued by the State Attorney's Office relates to the conviction of Rita L. Picazo who was initially arrested in August, 2004 in connection with a plan to defraud the County's Campaign Finance Trust Fund. According to the advisory, Picazo was sentenced to one year house arrest, followed by four years probation and she was ordered to repay Miami-Dade County \$7,000 and the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) \$5,000 for investigative costs.

The OIG is continuing its investigation.

cc: Mr. George Burgess, County Manager
Mr. Robert A. Ginsburg, County Attorney
Ms. Constance Kaplan, Supervisor of Elections
Ms. Cathy Jackson, Director, Audit & Management Services

Clerk of the Board (Copy Filed)



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WOMAN CHARGED IN ELECTIONS FRAUD PROBE ENTERS GUILTY PLEA

Miami (October 13, 2004) – Rita L. Picazo (Picazo), arrested on August 18, 2004 in connection with a plan to provide the failed Jorge Roque County Commission campaign with sufficient contributors to gain County Trust Fund money, pled guilty today to a variety of campaign related offenses.

Picazo had been charged with:

- 1 Count of Limitations on Contributions
- 1 Count of Conspiracy to Commit Grand Theft-
- 4 Counts of Solicitation to Commit Perjury in an Official Proceeding

This investigation was undertaken by the Miami-Dade County State Attorney's Office (SAO), the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) as a part of the newly formed joint Task Force on Elections Fraud.

After pleading guilty to all charges Ms. Picazo was sentenced to 1 year of Community Control, followed by 4 years of probation with the Special Conditions of repaying \$7,000 to Miami-Dade County and \$5,000 investigative costs to the Miami-Dade County Office of the Inspector General.

State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle stated, "Ms. Picazo's plea of guilty to these election law violations is a tribute to the outstanding investigative work of the Office of the Inspector General, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and the prosecutors who put together an exceptionally strong criminal case. This community demands clean and fair elections. I and the members of the joint Task Force on Elections Fraud intend to insure just such a result."

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