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

Memorandum

To: The Honorable Carlos Alvarez, Mayor
The Honorable Chairperson Joe Martinez
Members, Board of County Commissioners

From: Christopher Mazzella
Inspector General

Date: November 10, 2005

Re: County Employee Arrested for Bribery of Clerk's Office Employee

Attached is a news release relating to the arrest of Donnavan Wallace (Wallace) on two counts of Bribery. Wallace, an employee of the Clerk of the Court's Office since 1998, was arrested for bribing another employee of the Clerk's Office to gain access to certain files before they became available to the public.

Mr. Harvey Ruvin, Clerk of the Courts, brought the scheme to the attention of the Office of the Inspector General (OIG). Employees of the Clerk's Office fully cooperated in the investigation. Wallace's scheme involved obtaining foreclosure lawsuit files two days before those files were available for public inspection. The two-day window of opportunity would have allowed Wallace to contact banks or property owners before any legitimate foreclosure investor had a chance to, and then he would offer to buy the properties at low foreclosure prices only to resell them at a higher profit. Wallace offered as much as \$10,000 in cash to another employee of the Clerk's Office in order to obtain the files before the public-at-large.

Wallace's brazen actions jeopardized the integrity of the Clerk's Office and the Court system. Particularly distressing is the fact that he used his knowledge of the system and access to its employees to enrich himself. The investigation is continuing and additional arrests are expected. The OIG appreciates the notification by Mr. Ruvin and the cooperation of his staff.

cc: The Honorable Chief Judge Joseph Farina, 11th Judicial Circuit
Mr. Harvey Ruvin, Clerk of the County and Circuit Courts
Mr. George Burgess, County Manager
Ms. Cathy Jackson, Director, Audit & Management Services

Clerk of the Board (copy filed)



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL
MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

COUNTY EMPLOYEE ARRESTED FOR BRIBERY IN SCHEME TO CORRUPT COURT SYSTEM

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) and the Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office (SAO) announced today the arrest on Bribery charges of Mr. Donnavan Wallace (Wallace), age 34, of Miami-Dade County, following a joint investigation into a scheme by Wallace to corrupt the Miami-Dade County court system for his own personal gain.

In late September 2005, Mr. Harvey Ruvin, Clerk of Miami-Dade County and Circuit Courts, contacted the OIG regarding a bribery scheme by one of his employees. An employee in the Civil Division had notified supervisors of a bribe offered to the employee by Wallace in an attempt to profit from information available only to the Clerk's Office.

According to an arrest warrant affidavit filed by a Special Agent of the OIG, Wallace, an employee since 1998 of the Clerk of the Courts, Family Courts Division, bribed another employee in the Civil Division to obtain records of foreclosure lawsuits. Wallace, who did not have easy access to foreclosure filings in his position as a Courts Records Specialist, requested that the Civil Division employee make him copies of newly filed foreclosure lawsuits before they became available to the public. Once a foreclosure lawsuit is filed, the Clerk's Office must create a file, input data, and review the work to ensure accuracy before the record of the lawsuit becomes available to the public for inspection. This process takes about two days. The Civil Division employee notified supervisors of Wallace's request for files and worked with the OIG investigators.

According to the warrant, the cooperating employee, while under the control and supervision of OIG investigators, had clandestine meetings with Wallace and provided him with files not yet available to the public. Wallace's scheme involved obtaining the lawsuits as soon as they were filed, but before they became available to the public, in order to "get a two-day 'jump' on the other runners looking for foreclosures." The two-day window of opportunity could then be used by Wallace to research the property and contact banks or property owners in an attempt to purchase the properties for resale before anyone else could do so legitimately. Wallace's plot was to purchase the properties at a low foreclosure price and then sell them for a profit. Wallace assured the other employee that they could make a lot of money and stated he was working with a realtor, a mortgage broker and an attorney that would pay him for the foreclosure files. Wallace promised the other employee as much as \$10,000 in cash for the files.

In commenting on these charges, Inspector General Christopher Mazzella thanked the Clerk of the Courts, Mr. Harvey Ruvin, for referring this matter to the OIG and praised the Clerk's Office for its cooperation during the course of the investigation. Mr. Mazzella stated that Wallace's actions jeopardized the integrity of the Court system and that such conduct would not be tolerated. Mr. Mazzella noted that more arrests are expected.

"No one can ever tolerate a public servant, a member of the court system, using his official position to try to put a wad of cash into his own pocket," commented Miami-Dade State Attorney Kathy Fernandez Rundle. "The desire of this individual to entice others into doing the same thing only adds to the offensive nature of the crime. I'm proud of the action that the Office of the Clerk of the Courts and the individual employee all wanted to cooperate in the investigation and end this awful situation."

Copies of the Arrest Affidavit are available at the Office of the Inspector General, 19 West Flagler Street, Suite 220, Miami, Florida, telephone number (305) 375-1946, or at the State Attorney's Office, c/o Ed Griffith, 1350 N.W. 12 Avenue, Miami, Florida, telephone number (305) 547-0535. Inspector General Mazzella will be available at the OIG for a media opportunity today between 1:00 and 3:00 pm at the Office of the Inspector General.