

# **PRESS RELEASE**

## **Response to PAC Donation**

Tampa, Florida April 21, 2026

Special Magistrate Thomas E. Santarlas

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Back in July 2025, when I first raised concerns about the apparent mismanagement of the school zone speed camera program in Hillsborough County, something did not sit right. Based on the information now coming to light, those concerns appear increasingly justified.

The publicly available records indicate that a company (Red Speed) directly tied to the county's speed enforcement program made a substantial financial contribution to a political action committee (PAC) associated with the Sheriff. At a minimum, this creates the appearance of a conflict of interest. In a worst-case scenario, it raises serious questions about whether this could be perceived as a pay-to-play arrangement.

Public trust in law enforcement leadership is foundational. That trust is undermined when financial relationships between government contractors and elected officials lack clear separation or transparency. The Sheriff either knew, or reasonably should have known, that accepting funds from a vendor connected to an approved county program would raise immediate ethical concerns and erode public confidence.

Given the totality of these circumstances, I believe it is appropriate and necessary for an independent review to take place. I am calling on the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Florida Elections Commission, and/or the Hillsborough County State Attorney's Office to examine these matters thoroughly and determine whether any laws, ethical standards, or procurement policies have been violated.

This is not about politics. It is about accountability, transparency, and ensuring that public safety programs are administered without even the appearance of outside financial influence.

When situations like this arise, they demand answers. And the public deserves nothing less. Where there is this level of smoke, it is the responsibility of oversight agencies to determine whether there is fire.