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Subject: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Representative Geraldine Thompson Seeks Timely and Fair Resolution of Ethics Complaint Filed by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement with the Florida Commission on Ethics
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Representative Geraldine Thompson Seeks Timely and Fair Resolution of Ethics Complaint Filed by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement with the Florida Commission on Ethics

ORLANDO, Fla. — Representative Geraldine Thompson (D-Windermere) is seeking a timely and fair resolution of an ethics complaint filed by the **Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE)** with the **Florida Commission on Ethics**:

The investigation of **Representative Thompson** was initiated on February 23, 2021 by **Secretary of State Laurel Lee** who presented allegations to the **Assistant United States Attorney**, an agency where she once worked. **Lee** also once worked for **Federal Judge James Moody**. She was appointed to a judgeship by **Governor Rick Scott** and was appointed Secretary of State by **Governor Ron DeSantis**. **Secretary Lee** alleged that during the 2017 state budget, **Geraldine F. Thompson** promoted a grant that benefitted her daughters.

The allegations have no basis in fact due to **Thompson** leaving the Florida Senate in 2016 and being out of office in 2017. During a portion of 2017, **Thompson** was not only out of office, but out of the country in South Africa. The referral by **FDLE** inaccurately lists **Geraldine F. Thompson** as a current Senator and former Representative. **Thompson** is, in fact, a current Representative and former Senator. **Thompson** was made aware of the investigation and allegations in June of 2021. The investigations conducted by **FDLE**, the **Florida Department of Financial Services** and the **Federal Bureau of Investigations** found no criminal activity associated with the grant promoted by **Representative Thompson**. Failing to find any criminal wrongdoing, the issue was referred to the **Ethics Commission** alleging conflict of interest.

Representative Thompson says that **Governor Ron DeSantis** and his appointees are pursuing the ethics complaint as retaliation and retribution against her based on her filing and winning a lawsuit against **DeSantis** in 2020 when he sought to appoint a constitutionally unqualified individual to the **Florida Supreme Court**. **Representative Thompson** said, "They have worked for more than six months to tarnish my reputation and discredit me. They highlight that my daughter, **Elizabeth**, once worked at the **Wells'Built Museum** which I founded. As an employee of the **Wells'Built**, she earned the funds that they indicate she received. I am seeking a timely and fair resolution to the complaint which is reprisal against me for upholding the Florida Constitution."

Representative Thompson indicated that she met with **Secretary Lee** in 2019 regarding funds that were approved by the Legislature in 2016 to benefit 10 African American organizations that focus on historic preservation. The complaint focuses only on **Thompson** and the **Wells' Built Museum**. Though approved, the funds were not fully disbursed and some of the organizations had incurred debt based on the anticipated award of funds. **Laurel Lee** took no steps to make the organizations whole. During the same meeting, **Representative Thompson** asked for information regarding the relocation of a statue of **Confederate General Edmund Kirby Smith** which was slated to be placed in a museum in Lake County against the wishes of Lake County residents. **Representative Thompson** suggested that the statue be placed at the **Battlefield of Olustee** where it could be used as a teaching tool regarding the Civil War and Florida's membership in the Confederate States of America. **Representative Thompson** requested documents substantiating that Lake County had an agreement with the **Department of State** to relocate the statue there. No documentation was ever provided. **Representative Thompson** also asked that **Secretary Laurel Lee** take steps to remove the confederate memorial that stands on Capitol grounds. No steps were taken to remove the memorial which remains on State property.

Representative Thompson said, "In an atmosphere where individuals are forbidden to discuss race or racism, I understand that there are those who want to whitewash history and to silence voices like mine. Some are continuing to cling to the confederacy. This complaint is part of a larger effort and needs to be timely and fairly resolved."

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