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### **OFFICE AWARDED \$134,000 FOLLOWING YEARSLONG PUBLIC RECORDS LITIGATION**

After years of litigation in *Curtis Lee v. Fourth Judicial Circuit of Florida*, the Honorable Kathryn D. Weston has awarded the State Attorney's Office (SAO) more than \$134,000 in fees and costs. In 2022, Weston ruled in favor of the SAO concluding that the SAO had "fully and timely" responded to plaintiff Lee's requests and that the SAO's public records policy "comple[d] with the overall spirit and purpose" of the Public Records Act. The Fifth District Court of Appeal affirmed that ruling in 2023.

Weston's most recent ruling and fee award comes after a day-long evidentiary hearing. In finding that plaintiff Lee brought his lawsuit "for an improper purpose," the Court acknowledged Lee's animus for the SAO. The Court concluded that "[n]o reasonable person" would have filed such a lawsuit, particularly given "the SAO's continued professional handling of Mr. Lee's repeated records requests." The Court concluded that Lee's lawsuit was both frivolous and lacking legal justification. The final judgment orders Lee to reimburse the SAO the taxpayer dollars it paid to defend against the lawsuit.

"Our Public Records team continues to do an outstanding job serving the public. This litigation wasted office resources and taxpayer money, and it was totally unnecessary. We are grateful that the taxpayer dollars the office has been forced to spend on this lawsuit will be returned and can be used for their intended purpose," said State Attorney Melissa Nelson.

Attorney Michael Lockamy and the Bedell Firm represented the SAO in the litigation.