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**Serving Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee**

For Immediate Release

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**NO VIOLATION OF GRAND JURY SECRECY LAWS**

State Attorney Steve Russell announced today that he has conducted an inquiry into matters relating to claims made in recent newspaper articles that the deputy chief medical examiner had revealed contents of grand jury proceedings and had reached certain conclusions regarding the death of Ernest Weston.

On reviewing the situation, including a sworn statement taken from Dr. Robert Pfalzgraf, Russell concluded that no violation of the grand jury secrecy laws occurred. Dr. Pfalzgraf's statement is now available as a public record and is attached to this release.

State Attorney Russell issued the following statement:

“The secrecy of grand jury proceedings is well established in our law, and is based on important historical and practical reasons. I therefore take very seriously any alleged violation of that secrecy, whether by a witness or any other person, including any member of the news media.

Despite recent statements attributed to Dr. Pfalzgraf, which were either erroneously reported or taken out of context, it is now clear to me that no breach of grand jury secrecy has occurred in this matter. Further, the sworn statement he has now given to my office, outside of the grand jury, clarifies his position and findings regarding Mr. Weston's death.

The effectiveness of the grand jury is dependant upon the secrecy of the proceedings. The secrecy rule serves, in part, to encourage witnesses with pertinent information to testify fully and truthfully, without fear of being subject to outside influences, including public pressure, contempt, or ridicule. We want to ensure citizens and witnesses they can come forward and give full and truthful information.”

Florida Statute 905.27 (2) states in part:

“It is unlawful for any person knowingly to publish, broadcast, disclose, or communicate to any other person, or knowingly to cause or permit to be published, broadcast, disclosed, divulged, or communicated to any other person, in any manner whatsoever, any testimony of a witness examined before the grand jury, or the content, gist, or import thereof, except when such testimony is or has been disclosed in a court proceeding.”

Violations of this law can be punished by up to a year in jail.

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