

## **Press Release**

### **Clerk Forced to Eliminate Satellite Offices, Cut Programs, Layoff 46 Employees**

In response to a 43% cut in funding for the Clerk's office voted by the Board of County Commissioners (BCC), Collier Clerk of the Circuit Court, Dwight E. Brock announced that he will close 6 of the 7 satellite offices, eliminate the SAVE program and let go 46 employees.

On July 28<sup>th</sup> Mr. Brock presented his funding request for 6.1M to the BCC. The request already reflected a 10% reduction in spending, but the BCC agreed to approve only 3.5M, a 43% cut in funding. Mr. Brock informed the BCC that 3.5M was not adequate to run his office. In response, some commissioners recommended he close satellite offices, eliminate programs and lay off employees that did not have a direct benefit to the BCC.

Therefore, effective today, September 16, 2009 the Clerk' satellite offices located at Eagle Creek, Everglades City, Golden Gate City, Greentree Plaza, North Collier Government Services Center at Orange Blossom, and Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) on Airport- Pulling Road will be closed permanently. Only the Clerk's Immokalee satellite office will remain in operation. Citizens throughout Collier County will now be required to conduct their business with the Clerk's office at courthouse annex located at Government Center Complex at 3301 Tamiami Trail E. Naples, FL 34112.

In addition, 46 Clerk employees will be terminated on or before October 1, 2009. These layoffs will impact staff in departments across the organization. The Clerk's administrative staff will be reduced by 33% and most of the remaining administration staff will work a 32 hour week.

Funding for the SAVE program (Support, Alimony, Visitation and Enforcement Program) was also cut. This model program assisted family members in need and who were operating under a court order.

These drastic funding cuts to the Clerk's office were approved by the BCC even though they had previously agreed to raise taxes to maintain the current level of county services and staffing. That commitment certainly did not apply to the Clerk's request for funds as the BCC voted a 43% reduction.

In a March 16<sup>th</sup> memo, the Clerk of Courts Operations Corporation, which sets Clerk's budgets for court operations statewide, imposed a 19% reduction (over 2M) on the Collier Clerk of Courts, retroactive to October 1<sup>st</sup> 2008.

Prior to these latest cutbacks, Mr. Brock had taken steps to reduce expenses by eliminating or deactivating 31 budgeted positions, not filling an additional 16 replacement or retirement positions, implementing a hiring freeze and doing away with all agency-wide cost of living, merit and base salary adjustments. Paid overtime was eliminated and reduced work schedules and unpaid furlough days implemented.

Mr. Brock deeply regrets having to take these actions but stated that the BCC decision left him no alternative. He also promised the citizens of Collier County that “the Clerk’s office will provide a level of service commensurate with the level of funding available, and will do it in the same manner as in the past, with a smile and a professional attitude.”

**For more information contact:**

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