



**Joseph M. Centorino**, Inspector General

TO: File  
FROM: Joseph Centorino, Inspector General  
DATE: December 8, 2020  
RE: Complaint Regarding Commissioner Richardson's Food Distribution During Early Voting  
OIG No. 21-07

**Allegations:**

On Tuesday, October 20 2020, the second day of early voting, the OIG received a complaint which alleged that the weekly free food distribution in North Beach, supported by Commissioner Richardson, had been moved to a location within two blocks of an early voting site. The complainant stated that for six months, the food distribution had taken place on Collins Avenue and 87<sup>th</sup> Street. However, on October 6, 2020, it was moved to the North Shore Library, located at 75<sup>th</sup> and Collins, which is the site of one of two early voting locations on Miami Beach. In support of the allegation, the complainant provided copies of food distribution flyers for the events occurring between May and October. The complainant also stated, "They decided that the 75<sup>th</sup> St. location was really pushing it with perception, so the free food pickup location was officially moved yesterday to the bandshell at 73<sup>rd</sup> St., two short blocks from the polling place at 75<sup>th</sup>... free food for votes". The bandshell at 73<sup>rd</sup> Street is the same location which prompted a similar complaint to the OIG after the 2019 election.

**Analysis:**

Commissioner Richardson has been supporting the food distribution for many months. The events regularly occur in South and North Beach locations which have not changed. In the South, drivers receive food in the parking lot at 21<sup>st</sup> and Collins; in the North it is at 87<sup>th</sup> and Collins.

The walk-up food distributions started on July 14, 2020. These events also alternate between South and North Beach locations. Since July 14<sup>th</sup>, they have occurred on the following dates:

July 21, 2020 @ 833 6<sup>th</sup> Street (South Shore Community Center)  
July 28, 2020 @ 501 72<sup>nd</sup> Street (North Shore Park)  
August 4, 2020 @ 833 6<sup>th</sup> Street (South Shore Community Center)

October 6, 2020 @ 75<sup>th</sup> and Collins (North Shore Library)  
October 13, 2020 @ 833 6<sup>th</sup> Street (South Shore Community Center)  
October 20, 2020 @ 73<sup>rd</sup> and Collins (North Shore Bandshell)

Special Agent Singer contacted Commissioner Richardson's office to ask why the food distribution was moved to the 73<sup>rd</sup> and Collins location on October 20<sup>th</sup>. (To be more specific, the actual location was on 73<sup>rd</sup> and Ocean Terrace, one block east of Collins.) Agent Singer spoke with Luis Callejas, the aide to Commissioner Richardson. Mr. Callejas confirmed that they alternate the walk-up food distributions between North and South Beach. He advised that in the North Beach area, they had tried different locations and had the most success at the North Shore Library. Not remembering that early voting would be occurring on October 20<sup>th</sup> at that location, Mr. Callejas published a flyer announcing the food distribution at the North Shore Library on the same date. When he realized his mistake, he quickly created a new flyer with the updated location, 73<sup>rd</sup> and Collins.

Special Agent Singer asked Mr. Callejas why he selected 73<sup>rd</sup> and Collins rather than North Shore Park where they had previously distributed food. He advised that many of the residents who come to the walk-up locations park their cars and walk to get their food. In anticipation of higher than normal voter turnout, the North Shore Park parking lot, located a few blocks from the voting site, was needed for voters and he did not want to take up spaces. He stated that they wanted a location close to the library because that is where the public had originally been told to go, but far enough away to comply with Resolution-31274. Resolution 2020-31274, which was adopted on May 13, 2020, prohibits candidates, including incumbents seeking reelection, from hosting or campaigning at charitable or not-for-profit food distributions. It further prohibits charitable or not-for-profit food distributions from taking place within 200 feet of any polling place located within the City during the voting period for any election, including early voting, beginning when the polls open and ending when the polls close or the last voter has voted.

Mr. Callejas provided all the flyers as well as a picture from a resident which was posted on Facebook showing the walkup location at 73<sup>rd</sup> and Ocean Terrace. Similarly, Special Agent Singer observed and photographed the walk-up location. While Special Agent Singer did not measure the exact distance between the walk-up food distribution and voting site at 75<sup>th</sup> and Collins, she noted that the voting site is two city blocks away from the charitable food event and cannot be seen from the voting site. Neither the photograph provided by Mr. Callejas nor those taken by Agent Singer show that any campaign activities were occurring at the food distribution location. (All flyers and photos are part of the OIG file.)

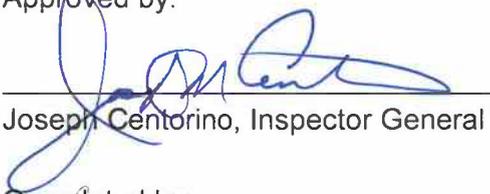
There is nothing about the schedule that suggests the food event was intentionally moved to a location near an early voting site in an effort to influence voters. There is no evidence that any campaign materials were being distributed or that any other campaign activities were occurring at the food distribution site while Agent Singer was observing. Commissioner Richardson is

neither a candidate nor an incumbent seeking reelection at this time which is the prohibited status pursuant to Resolution 2020-31274.

Finally, the regularly scheduled food distribution which would have occurred on election day has been cancelled. Mr. Callejas sent Agent Singer a copy of the flyer announcing the cancellation and confirmed that the public has been advised.

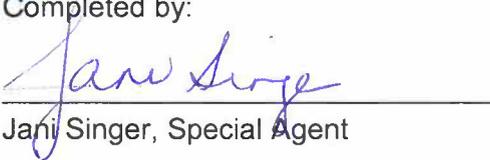
This allegation of free food for votes in this instance is unfounded.

Approved by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Joseph Centorino, Inspector General

12/08/2020  
Date

Completed by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jani Singer, Special Agent

12/8/2020  
Date