

RUSSELL DRAKE

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June 17, 2019

To: Florida Democratic Party

RE: Request to Halt Democratic Black Caucus of Florida State Election

Dear Leadership of the Florida Democratic Party,

My name is Russell Drake. I serve as the First Vice President of the Democratic Black Caucus of Florida and Immediate Past President of the Orange County Black Caucus. **I am also a candidate for DBCF State President.**

I write you asking for a Halt/Postponing of the Democratic Black Caucus of Florida State Elections scheduled to take place this **SATURDAY June 22, 2019 at our 37th State Conference**

The **reason for halting the election** is to **allow time for an appeal of a DBCF Grievance** that was presented and ruled on Yesterday, June 16, 2019 that wrongfully suspended/removed me from membership.

The **timeliness of this alleged grievance directly affects our election process** as well as begs to **question the legitimacy of the ruling/investigation** by the **Grievance Committee** appointed by incumbent President Lydia Hudson who is running for re-election.

I will be formally **appealing the Grievance that was ruled upon by the Democratic Black Caucus of Florida (DBCF) via an Executive Council Tele-Conference on Father's Day Sunday – June 16, 2019 from 7:00 pm to 9:43 pm.** On the Conference Call the Democratic Black Caucus Grievance Committee, Chaired by Immediate Past DBCF State President Henry Crespo, did the following:

- 1) Verbally presented an alleged grievance against the Orange County Black Caucus and myself as President**
 - a. At the crux of it are 2 checks remitted from Orange County to the State DBCF with one signature. **Both checks received and deposited by the DBCF Treasurer with no objection in February 2019**
- 2) Verbally stated that they (Grievance Committee) had Investigated the alleged grievance without contacting me nor notifying anyone in the Orange County Black Caucus that a Grievance had been filed**
- 3) In the oral report, the Grievance was filed by the State Black Caucus Nomination Committee which is Chaired by Beverlye Neal and includes member Susie Copeland, both of whom make up two of the three people on the Grievance Committee**

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- a. Note: I submitted an application to the nomination committee on May 10, 2019 for consideration and verification to run for DBCF State President
- 4) Verbally **Recommended my immediate suspension/membership removal upon their alleged findings allowing no due process** to the accused (me)
- 5) To date have still **provided no written form of a grievance to me nor Orange County Black Caucus**

After the presentation and a series of questions, Democratic Black Caucus of Florida President Lydia Hudson opened the floor for a motion for suspension/membership removal with the immediate calling for the question and **muting me on the conference call so that I wouldn't get a chance to give unreadiness nor defend myself against these allegations.** The vote was very unclear and confusing to most. According to DBCF State Secretary Hazel Gillis' tally **of the alleged 30 people on the phone, 19 votes were cast for my membership removal.** President Hudson indicated that the motion passed, when in fact it didn't. According to *DBCF Bylaws Article IV, Section 4: Removal from Membership. Any member of the DBCF may be removed by a two-thirds (2/3) vote.* Numerically, **the vote itself fell one (1) short of 2/3**

I am appealing several things in the Grievance Process

- 1) I appeal the Grievance itself, as it never came from the Orange County Black Caucus nor was it filed by a person on record.
- 2) I appeal the lack of due process in giving no notice of a Grievance filed to any accused parties
- 3) I appeal the Recommendation of the Grievance Committee for suspension/removal of membership. Per the **DBCF Policy & Procedures Manual Article XII Section C: *In the case where any DBCF member is found to be in violation of the Bylaws, Rules and Procedures, or General Resolutions, the President shall issue a written reprimand outlining the violation. If three written reprimands are issued to the same member during his or her term, the Committee will discuss a vote to remove that member.***
 - a. **No written nor verbal reprimand has ever been issued for any alleged violation**
- 4) I appeal the **conflicts of interest involved as the Nominations Committee Chair Beverlye Neal is also on the Grievance Committee and potentially the individual who filed the alleged Grievance. She also serves as the DBCF Parliamentarian** and was allowed to vote in that capacity, against Bylaw policy:
 - a. Article VI, Section 6C states: ***The parliamentarian shall Be a non-voting member of the executive committee.***
- 5) I appeal the legitimacy of the Executive Council Meeting itself as **members not on the council were counted in for quorum and allowed to vote and make motions.** Appointed DBCF State Advisor, Grace Carrington, as well as several members on the call wrongly proxy voted. Per the DBCF Bylaws,

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- a. ARTICLE X, Section 1 states: *There shall be an executive committee composed of the elected officers, chapter presidents, the immediate past president, standing committee chairs*
- b. Last sentence of ARTICLE VIII Section 1 states: *No proxy voting shall take place.*
- 6) I appeal any attempt to alter the membership listing of voting eligible members of the Orange County Black Caucus. **Our Dues and Membership Roster were submitted by the February 28th deadline, our checks were accepted and DEPOSITED by DBCF State Treasurer Jill Lewis-Daggs with membership Roster also being submitted to she and 2nd Vice President Glenda Alford Atkins. There was no communication from the DBCF State Secretary Hazel Gillis, nor the State Treasurer indicating any discrepancies were found. We are in compliance with the Bylaws**
 - a. ARTICLE V Section 2 states: *All DBCF dues shall be payable to the Democratic Black Caucus of Florida upon acceptance for membership and renewable on or before February 28 for the ensuing year, postmarked to the DBCF treasurer by February 28th*
 - b. ARTICLE VIII Section 4a states: *To vote and to participate in the DBCF election of officers, a member's application or renewal of membership and dues must be received by the treasurer as outlined in Article V in the odd-numbered years.*
 - c. ARTICLE VIII Section 5c states: *Any discrepancies with the initial report shall be cleared up by the local chapter president and/or chapter treasurer in coordination with the state DBCF secretary and treasurer prior to voting.*

Florida Democratic Party Leadership, with the evidence presented I ask that you Halt/Postpone the DBCF State Elections scheduled to take place this Saturday, June 22, 2019.

I further ask for consideration to Vacate the alleged Grievance and Ruling of the Democratic Black Caucus of Florida and for my immediate re-instatement to the DBCF.

Thank you for your time and efforts!

Sincerely,

Russell Drake
First Vice President
Democratic Black Caucus of Florida

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