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OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL STATE OF FLORIDA

Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Attorney General James Uthmeier Charges Osceola Sheriff in Massive Central Florida Illegal Gambling Operation, Public Corruption Scheme

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.— Today, Attorney General James Uthmeier's Office of Statewide Prosecution charged Osceola County Sheriff Marcos R. Lopez and others in a massive Central Florida gambling operation. Initially engaging the operation for campaign contributions and personal payments, Sheriff Lopez played a multifaceted role in expanding and protecting this illegal enterprise, using his office to shield the enterprise from law enforcement.

"This is a solemn day for Florida and our law enforcement community. We put great trust in our constitutional officers, especially those who are our communities' first line of defense." said **Attorney General James Uthmeier**. "However, the law must be applied equally, regardless of position, power, or branch of government. Public servants should never exploit the public's trust for personal gain. Our Statewide Prosecutors will hold Sheriff Lopez, his associates, and all lawbreakers accountable."

"Today's arrest underscores HSI's commitment to holding everyone, including public officials, accountable. No one, regardless of their position, is above the law," said **Homeland Security Investigations Tampa Special Agent in Charge John Condon**. "Corruption undermines the integrity of public trust, HSI along with our partners are committed to combatting it."

“As law enforcement, we are held to higher standards of integrity and character than other professions. This case revealed that Lopez violated the trust and integrity expected of him as the duly elected sheriff of Osceola County,” said **FDLE Commissioner Mark Glass**. “Florida’s sheriffs are leaders for not only their office and deputies, but for their community and the citizens that elected them. I want to thank our agents and analysts who worked diligently on this case with HSI and the Office of Statewide Prosecution to make sure that law enforcement officers are held to the standards expected of them.”

In 2023, a multi-agency investigation led by Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and joined by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) uncovered a criminal organization operating an illegal gambling enterprise throughout Central Florida, particularly in Lake and Osceola Counties. The organization generated more than $21.6 million in illicit proceeds.

Following his election as Osceola County Sheriff in November 2020, Lopez continued to advance the interests of the criminal organization and collected a portion of the illegal gambling proceeds for his involvement. Other individuals are expected to be served with arrest warrants in the coming days.

Lopez is charged with racketeering and conspiracy to commit racketeering.

Senior Assistant Statewide Prosecutors Colleen Monroe and Panagiota Papakos will prosecute the defendants in Florida's Fifth Judicial Circuit.

The investigation is ongoing, and other charges may be announced at a later date.

To view the current charging document, click here.

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