

Biscayne Building
19 West Flagler St., Suite 220
Miami, FL 33130
Phone: (305) 375-1946
Fax: (305) 579-2656
www.miamidadeig.org

**Office of the Inspector General
Miami-Dade County**

Memorandum

To: The Honorable Mayor Alex Penelas, Miami-Dade County

The Honorable Dr. Barbara Carey-Shuler, Chair
and Members of the Board of County Commissioners

The Honorable Harvey Ruvlin, Clerk of the Court

From: Christopher Mazzella,
Inspector General

Date: December 4, 2003

Re: Todd L. Nelson – Former Records Specialist, Office of the Recorder, Clerk of the
Courts

Attached is a news release relating to the arrest of a former Clerk's Office employee, Todd L. Nelson.

Nelson faxed his supervisors a letter of resignation on October 8, 2003 after being absent from work since April 7, 2003. Nelson claimed to have been serving as a juror on a Federal trial since April 7, 2003. During the approximately six months he was absent from his County job, Nelson was paid a total of \$17,388.47 in salary and benefits. On several occasions Nelson dropped by the office on purported breaks from jury duty and advised his supervisors and co-workers he was still serving on a jury. Nelson also called the office late in the afternoon to advise he was going home after a day of service. His continued comments led supervisors and co-workers to believe Nelson was serving his civic duty. After repeated requests by supervisors to provide documentation of his jury service, Nelson returned to work for five days and then submitted his resignation. The OIG investigation confirmed that Nelson was summoned but was never required to appear for jury service.

The Clerk of the Courts, which cooperated fully in the investigation, referred this matter to the OIG.

cc: Mr. George Burgess, County Manager
Mr. Robert Ginsburg, County Attorney
Ms. Ricky Schechtman, Senior Deputy Clerk

Clerk of the Board (copy filed)



NEWS RELEASE

County Employee Arrested for Jury Scam

Inspector General Christopher Mazzella today announced the arrest of a former County employee who falsely claimed to be on Federal jury service while collecting a County paycheck.

Todd Lorin Nelson, age 33, a resident of Miami-Dade County, surrendered today to the Dade-County State Attorney's Office (SAO) following an investigation by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) and the SAO into his continued absence from employment at the Office of the County Recorder, Miami-Dade Clerk of the Circuit and County Courts. Nelson was charged with Grand Theft and Official Misconduct. Nelson was employed with the Clerk's Office since 1990 and he held the position of Court Records Specialist until his resignation on October 8, 2003.

The affidavit filed by a Special Agent of the OIG reveals that Nelson advised his supervisor that he was called to jury duty on April 7, 2003. Nelson provided a copy of the summons for jury service he received from the United States District Court, Southern District of Florida, for a two-week period beginning April 7, 2003.

According to the affidavit, Nelson did not report back to work until September 29, 2003, one week short of six months from when he first stated he had been selected as a juror in a Federal trial. During the entire time Nelson was absent from work, his supervisors and co-workers thought he was serving on a jury. Nelson dropped by the office during what co-workers believed to be lunch breaks to pick up his pay stubs. He repeatedly told supervisors that he would provide documentation of his jury service at the conclusion of the trial. Occasionally, according to the affidavit, Nelson called the office to say he was on his way home from a day of jury service.

The affidavit states that on September 26, 2003, a supervisor left Nelson a message requesting proof of his jury service. Nelson reported to work the following Monday and stated his jury service was not over and that he would have to call Federal court once a week for possible continued service. On October 2, 2003, according to the affidavit, Nelson took the day off as his "Birthday Holiday", a benefit provided by the County to its employees. On October 8, 2003, after repeated requests to provide proof of jury service, Nelson faxed a resignation letter.

According to a Special Agent of the OIG, the Jury Administrator's Office of the United States District Court, Southern District of Florida, verified that Nelson, although summoned, was never required to appear and did not in fact appear for jury service in Federal Court. County records show that Nelson was paid a total of \$17,388.47 in salary and benefits from the time he claimed to be on jury service until his actual return to work and subsequent resignation.

Mr. Mazzella expressed his appreciation to the Clerk's Office for bringing this matter to the attention of the OIG and for cooperating fully in the investigation.

Copies of the arrest warrants and arrest affidavits for Nelson are available at the Inspector General's Office, 19 West Flagler Street, Suite 220, telephone number 305-375-1946 and at the State Attorney's Office, c/o Ed Griffith, 1350 N.W. 12 Avenue, telephone number 305-547-0535.

Media Opportunity – Inspector General Mazzella will be available for a media opportunity today, Thursday, December 4, 2003 between 1:30 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. at the OIG office.