

Feb 19, 2026

Contact Communications

Phone (850) 245-0150



OFFICE OF THE
ATTORNEY GENERAL
STATE OF FLORIDA

Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Attorney General James Uthmeier Launches Public Integrity Unit to Investigate Legislative Appropriations, Prosecute Misuse of Public Funds



Courtesy of the Office of the Attorney General

MIAMI, Fla.—Attorney General James Uthmeier announced the launch of a new Public Corruption Unit within the Office of Statewide Prosecution, aimed at identifying, investigating, and prosecuting corruption involving public funds and legislative appropriations.

“Our office is launching this unit to ensure taxpayer dollars are used for the taxpayers’ benefit—not special interests for political insiders or personal gain—we will expose and prosecute anyone using a position of public trust for personal benefit,” **said Attorney General James Uthmeier.** “I welcome the new partnership with U.S. Attorney Quiñones and proud to appoint Assistant Statewide Prosecutor Rich Mantei as Special Counsel to the Attorney General for Public Integrity.”

“Public money belongs to the people of Florida, not to insiders, special interests, or anyone looking for a kickback,” **said U.S. Attorney for Southern District of Florida Jason A. Reding**

Quiñones.“When bribery, extortion, embezzlement, or misuse of appropriations implicates federal law, we will investigate and prosecute without hesitation. Attorney General James Uthmeier is a strong partner in this effort. Together, our offices are committed to following the facts, protecting taxpayer dollars, and ensuring that those who abuse the public trust face real consequences.”

“We remain steadfast in our efforts to investigate public corruption cases,” **said FDLE Miami Special Agent in Charge John Vecchio.** “FDLE will continue to work with Attorney General Uthmeier, the Office of Statewide Prosecution and the U.S. Attorney’s Office to protect the integrity of our public offices and hold public officials accountable.”

The Public Integrity Unit will conduct a review of legislative appropriations from the past two fiscal years, with a focus on funds distributed to nonprofits, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other entities receiving public benefits.

The unit will focus on allegations involving, but not limited to, bribery, extortion, embezzlement, nepotism, kickbacks, and other forms of financial misconduct connected to public appropriations, including improper incentives or benefits tied to special interests. Public corruption cases frequently involve complex financial transactions and conduct that span multiple judicial circuits.

The Public Corruption Unit will be led by Assistant Statewide Prosecutor Richard Mantei, who will serve as Special Counsel to the Attorney General for Public Integrity. Mantei was with the State Attorney’s Office for the 4th Judicial Circuit for 17 years, during which he spent time as the Director of the Special Prosecution Unit—dedicated to fighting public corruption.

The Office of Statewide Prosecution will coordinate with federal, state, and local partners to ensure thorough investigations and appropriate enforcement. When public funds are misused, the conduct may violate both state and federal law, making cooperation essential. The U.S. Attorney’s Office is at the ready to pursue federal charges if, and when, necessary.

The Public Integrity Unit is part of an ongoing effort to ensure transparency, accountability, and lawful administration of taxpayer dollars. Entities receiving public funds are subject to oversight and must demonstrate that appropriations are used for legitimate public purposes that benefit the people of Florida.

###