

As the sheriff of this county for seven years and a long-time prosecutor and attorney, I have been appalled at the Commission on Ethics' process. From four alleged violations to three and now to two, in the end, this was all about \$300 spent over four officially sanctioned sheriff events that should have been resolved with the information I provided to my accounting department. It also had to do with the value of a three-night stay I spent at the personal invitation of Rick Staly, my former undersheriff's personally owned cabin. The value of this stay, by the testimony of the commission's own witness, was subject to interpretation. Staly is now running for sheriff against me.

Ultimately, I do take responsibility for all of my actions and do want to put this matter behind us; however, with a good conscience, I do not believe the penalties proposed by the ethics commission are appropriate based on my actions, nor are they equal to sanctions provided others. I only have to look at former Republican Flagler County Sheriff Don Fleming's 2012 ethics violation where he was fined only \$500 for his use of a membership to a private resort that was valued at over \$40,000 over a five-year period. During that time, Fleming spent \$20,000 in food, beverage and alcohol and received a member's discount of \$4,000.

I ask that you compare Fleming's penalty to my fine of \$6,200 and public censure for \$300 related to four events over a six-month period that was immediately reimbursed when the accounting error was discovered by our auditors. Remember, this was a proposed fine that was initially assessed as \$1,500 and subsequently, inexplicably, increased to \$19,000.

Finally, please do not forget who has been involved in this process. Mr. Staly, a man who claims he retired from the Flagler County Sheriff's Office after approximately two years of service has a sordid history of his own when it comes to ethical violations. He was demoted by then-Sheriff Kevin Beary of Orange County in 1999 in an attempt to improve the morale of the workforce who complained that Staly engaged in micromanagement and mismanagement. Subsequently, Staly left the Orange County Sheriff's Office under a cloud after he was criticized for using his official agency photograph in an advertisement for vitamins that garnered him over \$60,000.

He also was involved in Sheriff Fleming's 2012 ethics probe as he was the head of security at the Club at Hammock Beach and recommended that Fleming be granted the free membership, the same membership which was at the heart of his ethics violation.

I have never violated any state law or agency policy or procedure and intend to appeal this affront to our system of laws. I am certain that an unbiased district court of appeals will overturn this biased decision.