

CITY OF CORAL GABLES

--MEMORANDUM--



TO: Mayor Lago, Vice Mayor Anderson, Commissioner Fernandez, Commissioner Lara, Peter Iglesias

FROM: Commissioner Melissa Castro

DATE: July 16, 2025

SUBJECT: Litigation Costs and Fiscal Responsibility Following Recent Resolution

Colleagues,

In light of the resolution approved at our last commission meeting, which involves potentially joining a lawsuit against the state regarding the timing of elections, I believe it's crucial to consider the financial implications of such legal actions, particularly when these efforts have not yielded favorable results.

Over the past several years, our city has spent a significant amount on litigation and recent data from the City Attorney's office confirms the following expenditures:

- **\$243,980.35** was paid to Kozyak Tropin Throckmorton for legal fees related to litigation challenging the City's ordinance banning polystyrene.
- **\$184,289.74** was paid to Holland & Knight for legal services in the case involving the proposed Wawa development.
- **\$127,798.78** was paid in litigation costs after the City sued the State of Florida regarding local firearm regulations, a case that ultimately reached the Florida Supreme Court and was unsuccessful.¹

These three cases alone amount to **\$556,068.87** in taxpayer-funded legal fees.

As elected officials, we have an obligation to weigh not only the merits of a case, but also the realistic likelihood of success and the financial impact on our residents. Filing lawsuits against

¹ A limited statutory provision regarding removal of local officials was invalidated, but the majority of claims were unsuccessful.

the State, particularly on matters where legislative preemption is clear, should be approached with extreme caution.

We should not champion litigation as a substitute for governance, especially when alternative solutions exist; such as binding ballot questions that invite residents into the process and minimize financial risk. Symbolic legal battles, even those with good intentions, become costly when the end result is failure and our taxpayers are left holding the bill.

I urge us all to adopt a more pragmatic, fiscally responsible lens when legal action is proposed, and to ensure that any litigation strategy is grounded in clear legal standing, achievable outcomes, and measurable public benefit.

¹ A limited statutory provision regarding removal of local officials was invalidated, but the majority of claims were unsuccessful.