



OFFICE OF THE STATE ATTORNEY



PRESS RELEASE

October 2, 2024

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State Attorney's Office Forms New Hate Crimes Task Force

A new Palm Beach County Hate Crimes Task Force seeks to raise awareness about an alarming rise of illegal acts of prejudice in the community, while working on efforts to prevent incidents and provide support for victims, the State Attorney's Office announced.

The group, which recently convened its first meeting, includes more than a dozen community leaders, law enforcement representatives and prosecutors. Assistant State Attorney Freddelle Menard, who oversees the new Hate Crimes Unit at the State Attorney's office, leads the task force.

This diverse coalition includes the Anti-Defamation League of Florida, the American Jewish Committee, the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida, Compass LGBTQ+ Community Center, and Palm Beach County Victim Services. The Broward State Attorney's Office is also collaborating with the task force.

Key objectives include: educating the community about the specifics of hate crimes; enhancing public awareness and reporting of incidents; collaborating with law enforcement to investigate and prosecute offenders; and supporting victims of hate crimes.

Florida Statute 775.085 defines hate crimes as those committed based on prejudice due to the race, color, ancestry, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, homeless status, or advanced age of the victim.

Seeking a strong response to the troubling instances of hate crimes within Palm Beach County, Deputy Chief Assistant State Attorney Alexcia Cox had previously set in motion plans for both the dedicated Hate Crimes Unit and the special task force.

The Task Force plans to hold quarterly meetings, while sharing more frequent updates on its yearlong activities and initiatives through social media.

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